

PROOF

Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Wednesday 13 August 2025

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Wednesday 13 August 2025

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 9:33 am, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

Bills

Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025

Introduction and first reading

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (09:33): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Australian Grands Prix Act 1994 in relation to the race period, the definition of ‘grand prix insignia’, acting appointments and public access areas, to provide for the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to host approved events, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (09:34): I seek a brief explanation of the bill, please.

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (09:34): The bill proposes to extend the race period for up to 21 days, with options for public and tenant access to Albert Park during this time. The current provisions are that the race gets established and the infrastructure gets established over 17 weeks. Within that 17 weeks there is a seven-day period which is for the exclusive use of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation. This bill seeks to increase the period of that exclusivity for up to 21 days but also give the AGPC the authority to designate public access areas, which is a way to balance public access use both by the tenant sporting clubs and the businesses there but also by casual users of the park, because there are over 7 million users of that park. It is a good fix for that.

The bill will also address changes in the Australian Grand Prix Corporation’s ownership of insignia and intellectual property, increase the annual payment to Parks Victoria, enable the AGPC to host non-motorsport events – not necessarily at Albert Park, just anywhere across Victoria – as an entity and improve corporate governance arrangements.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read a second time tomorrow.

Safer Protest with a Registration System and a Ban on Face Coverings Bill 2025

Introduction and first reading

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:36): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to provide for the registration and authorisation of public protests, to give legal protection to persons who participate in authorised public protests, to provide for prohibition orders and exclusion orders, to prohibit the wearing of face coverings at public protests, to consequentially amend the Summary Offences Act 1966, and for other purposes.

What we have seen in this state is a state that once was the great state has become the hate state. It is a state that has allowed lawlessness to creep into Victoria, a state that has allowed people to creep around in the middle of the night – extremists wearing face masks, inciting hate and intimidating others with absolutely no consequences. We have a Premier that 240 days ago said she would bring in stronger protest powers. Where are they? We have in this government a social commentator that is sitting on the sidelines doing nothing, not a Premier that is showing leadership but a social commentator that every time this stuff happens says, ‘Isn’t this horrible?’ I think Victorians are sick of words. They want action. They want consequences. They want to make sure that people that protest peacefully are protected, but extremists that go about targeting individuals face consequences.

What we are proposing today is a five-point plan. The first point includes a protest registration system. We are the only state in the nation that does not have a registration system. It is little wonder why we are the protest capital. People should be able to protest peacefully, but why is it that in Victoria they cannot? That is because we do not have a registration system.

Mary-Anne Thomas interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: I know the government – and the Minister for Health – is saying, ‘What is the Chief Commissioner of Police saying?’

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the House!

David SOUTHWICK: Thank you, Speaker. I can inform the Minister for Health and the government that the Police Association Victoria wants these powers, because the men and women on the frontline are sick and tired of doing their job with one arm tied behind their backs. They want to be supported. They are sick of having a Minister for Police that just uses weasel words and says they are backing Victoria Police. Why don’t they do something and give them the powers to act? That includes, in addition to permits, ensuring that we have stronger move-on laws than those that were abolished in 2015 under the Andrews government, a weak opportunity that was abolished. Those laws would ensure that those people that continue coming back and inciting would be moved on.

The third part would ensure exclusion orders. Those people that keep coming back and inciting hate, they would be excluded from returning. And if they kept returning to the city wearing masks, intimidating others and burning flags, they would ultimately be facing jail time. That is what they need. Those extremists should not be allowed to hijack our city and our state. Fourthly, we need to unmask these gutless cowards. That is what Victorians expect. These people that creep around in the middle of the night, hiding their faces, need to be exposed for who they are. The government has promised this. Where are those laws?

The government has the opportunity today to get on board with the opposition and support them. At every single opportunity we have led the way, whether it be on tobacco laws, on machete laws or on bail laws. At every opportunity we are leading the way with law and order, and this government is playing catch-up. Catch up today with protest permits, with registrations and with safer communities, because that is what this bill does.

The final part of this bill deals with protecting people’s freedoms, because we believe on this side that those people who want to protest peacefully should be supported and police should be available to them to be able to do what they can to express their views. We will do that. We will back people that want to maintain freedom of speech, but we will not back hate speech. That is why this government needs to get on board and do something.

22,000 police shifts have been diverted away from keeping us safe in our communities to babysitting 500 protests, 95 protests in the city. Just ask the hotels association and the traders, who say over the weekend they have lost somewhere between 45 and 50 per cent of trade. We need these permit registrations. We need safer protest powers for economic reasons, for safety reasons and ultimately to return law and order to this state. It has become a lawless state under Labor. This government is playing catch-up. It is time for the Premier to get off the sidelines, show some leadership and back our plan to keep the community safe. That is what this is about. The Premier has an opportunity to either make Victoria safe or continue to make us the hate state that it is under her.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (09:41): What an extraordinary turn of events, what an extraordinary performance that was. Those opposite have opened up in this place and once again they have added to their volume of talking down Victoria any time they get. To describe Victoria as ‘the hate state’ is absolutely extraordinary. Even if you took the most extreme views on what they are saying about Victoria, they had a moment with the anti-vilification bill – they had a moment right there – and they let themselves down. They had that moment. This is once again an example of the

Liberals – because I do not think too many Nationals are this out of control – putting forward something that has been cooked up on dot points to distract from some of their internal absolute haemorrhaging that is going on at the moment.

Members interjecting.

Tim RICHARDSON: Case in point. You bring it in.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mordialloc, if you wish to continue your contribution, you will come to order.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Nepean will leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Nepean withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: The member for Mordialloc, without assistance.

Tim RICHARDSON: We see a procedural motion come forward today to bring on a bill when a large number of the hallmarks of protections were right there in the anti-vilification bill. When you look at the contributions of those opposite to bring on a procedural debate that is at odds with the comments made by the Chief Commissioner of Police around a permit system for protests, and then you have got the descriptions – bringing a dot point list in; we have seen this in procedural motions – you go: what is this really about? It is once again about opposition by *Herald Sun* or 3AW dot points, bringing them in and just talking into the ether. There is no strategic justification for bringing this forward, because if those opposite were serious about protecting people from hate they would have contributed with meaningful impact on the anti-vilification bill. I still sit there and wonder why on earth the Liberal Party was opposed to the anti-vilification bill. With all that they are saying with this bill, they have the gumption to get in here, when multicultural communities, faith-based communities and LGBTIQ+ communities were begging the Parliament for support and assistance on ending hate, with dot points saying that we are a hate state.

James Newbury: A point of order, Speaker – relevance.

The SPEAKER: The member for Mordialloc was being relevant. He was referring to hate laws.

Tim RICHARDSON: This is really key. This is very –

James Newbury: On a further point of order, Speaker, we are debating the proposed introduction of a separate bill. This is not an opportunity for the member to slag off on the Liberal Party, which is what he is doing, to cover up the fact that this government will not introduce face bans.

Tim RICHARDSON: If you want to ban –

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Mordialloc, you will not continue your contribution if you continue to not listen to me. Member for Mordialloc, this is a standard bill that has been introduced. I understand that you have been talking about context. Come back to the bill.

Tim RICHARDSON: This goes to the necessary parts of how we debate and bring things forward as a Parliament and the consultation that needs to happen with those that help to enforce laws in our state. Respect that you cannot pick and choose. Those opposite cannot pick and choose the advice they want to seek from police when it suits their narrative, when the police commissioner is on the record expressing concerns about those protests. When the opportunity has come forward in the past to protect Victorians from some of the worst elements of hate, when we had that moment in time and all of our communities were pleading for that leadership, there was only one political party in here that was driving that forward. That is key to why this procedural approach and this bill do not stack up today.

It is really concerning to hear the lead speaker in here describe Victoria in those terms, to hear him literally say ‘lawless’ and literally say that we are a ‘hate state’. What on earth is going on here that we talk Victoria down? It is an outrageous attack on Victorians to describe our state in this way.

Danny O’Brien (Gippsland South) (09:46): I am very pleased to rise to support the member for Caulfield, and I will speak on the issue that he is trying to bring this bill in to address, not some straw man that those opposite are really more interested in talking about.

A member interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the House!

Danny O’Brien: You are picking and choosing what you want to debate.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Gippsland South, you have been warned. I will sit you down. Through the Chair.

Danny O’Brien: On that point, Speaker, this is a debate about whether we have a debate on this legislation. Yesterday in this chamber we had the Premier saying on another piece of legislation that it was not a government bill, as though this Parliament is only for the government, as though the Parliament is not the representative of the people and does not have the opportunity to bring in legislation. The Premier went on to say they did not want to debate that bill because the opposition often gets it wrong. They are saying the same thing again today – well, bring it on. If the government does not think that our bills are right, if the government is not prepared to actually put –

Brad Battin interjected.

Danny O’Brien: Exactly. It is not brave enough to have the debate. Do not just shut us down. This is the people’s Parliament. It is a Parliament for the people; it is not a Parliament for the government or the executive.

This legislation that the member for Caulfield is trying to bring in is about giving some public order back to our state, because we have seen it over the last couple of years absolutely diminished. This legislation will get the balance right between ensuring that people have the right to protest and freedom of speech, but also that people going about their business literally – businesses in the CBD and elsewhere – and people moving through our cities and towns have opportunity. It also means that we have law and order right throughout the state.

As the member for Caulfield indicated, in the last two years 22,000 police shifts have been dedicated to 500 protests here in the city. That is not 22,000 police sitting around who are waiting for protests – they have had to come from somewhere else. They have come from not only the suburbs but from our regional centres as well. Only last week I was speaking to a local police officer who is at his wit’s end with the resourcing issues that they are facing. This is one of the issues. They are constantly having to send people to cover shifts elsewhere, and in many cases it is because of these protests that are going on.

This is not just an issue for the city, it is an issue of public law and order right throughout our state, and to be honest, people are fed up. They are fed up not just with the protests that cause chaos and sometimes lead to violence, sometimes lead to violence against police, but they are fed up with the crime on the streets, and the poor police just do not have the resources to address them. I hear it time and time again. I have got family in the force, and they say they are dealing with what comes at them and nothing else because they do not have the resources, and protests are one of the reasons.

This bill would get the balance right. We would introduce the protest registration system, and that system would give those who are doing the right thing protection from certain prosecution, such as for obstruction.

We know that the vast majority in the protests that occur do the right thing. I can think of the emergency services tax protest that blocked Spring Street and Bourke, where they did the right thing. There was disruption, yes, but they had already spoken to the police. That is an example of how this system would work. They would be registered. They would also have some protection against issues like obstruction.

There are those, though, who are not interested in peaceful protest. If you turn up to a protest wearing a ski mask, you – generic, Speaker – are not there for a peaceful protest. If you are doing that, then you are clearly not there to peacefully protest. That is why this legislation would also put in a ban on masks, because if you are turning up with a ski mask or a balaclava to a protest –

A member: Goggles.

Danny O'BRIEN: or goggles – you have actually got to question your peaceful intent. I am all for freedom of protest and freedom of speech. This legislation would get the balance right. I commend the work of both the member for Caulfield and the member for Malvern, who have been working on this for some time – not talking about it like those opposite, who promised 240 days ago to do something. Now is your opportunity. Bring it on for debate and let us talk about it.

The SPEAKER: I remind members that the use of the words 'you' and 'your' is a reflection on the Chair, in whatever context they might be presented.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (09:51): I want to take the chamber back to an article that was published three years ago in the *Age*:

Several state Liberal MPs have encouraged a large and sometimes angry group of protesters gathered on the steps of Parliament House, some of whom had earlier chanted violent slogans around a full-sized gallows and called for people to "dance on the end of a rope".

So I think it is timely for those opposite to look in the mirror – literally turn it around and reflect on how you are contributing to –

The SPEAKER: The member for Albert Park! Through the Chair!

Nina TAYLOR: I apologise to the Speaker, and I will take that. The opposition might wish to consider their behaviour that is on public record. Brad Battin's Liberal Party opposed our land –

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind you to call members by their correct titles.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes. The opposition opposed our landmark Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Bill 2024, and yet there were some reports on radio where it was as if they were trying to claim they were the masters of that bill. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Roma Britnell interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member the South-West Coast!

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, are we ever going to get to the matter before the house?

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Albert Park to come back to the procedural motion.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes, absolutely, Speaker. I am speaking to the heart of what those opposite claim they are seeking to achieve with their proposed legislation as opposed to what it could actually deliver. There is hypocrisy in their behaviour, and there is a continuum of that. We know when it came to the delivery of our anti-vilification and social cohesion laws, our multicultural and multifaith communities were begging those opposite, as was said by the member for Mordialloc, to support the bill.

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

The SPEAKER: Member for Albert Park, this is a procedural motion. I ask you to come back to the motion.

Nina TAYLOR: I respect that 100 per cent, but I am also rebutting propositions that have been put by the opposition.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the member is debating the issue and debating your earlier ruling.

The SPEAKER: The member for Albert Park was responding to the point of order that was made previously, and the member for Albert Park said that she was rebutting what had been said by previous speakers. Your point of order is in relation to the procedural motion again. Member for Albert Park, I ask you to come back to the procedural motion.

Nina TAYLOR: Absolutely. Of course we have already laid out the government program for this week, which has already been voted upon. There is important legislation that needs to be debated and discussed today, including regarding bail laws et cetera, and it is interesting that those opposite are seeking to delay those processes. It is interesting in the context of them claiming to be the saviours of lawfulness in this state, when I have already put on the table – because these are some of the issues that I am seeking to rebut – propositions by those opposite when they are trashing the state of Victoria, which they want to do on nearly every sitting of Parliament, claiming that it is completely lawless. That implies that all Victorians have no respect for the law, which I find incredibly offensive. This is not in any way to excuse the behaviour of a small number of extremists who have behaved in a disgraceful manner. Nobody is resiling from that in any way, shape or form, but to declare every Victorian as lawless –

Steve Dimopoulos: Except those protesting against the emergency services levy; they are okay.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes, exactly right. That was different, that was special and that is allowed. Or maybe having gallows on the front steps of Parliament – that is allowed by the opposition, so it is interesting what they choose to approve. And also there were some pretty disparaging remarks about the Premier. I must say they were absolutely disgraceful, and anyone in this chamber who is backing them in should hang their head in shame, because that is absolutely a double standard. When you are coming here professing that you are going to resolve all hate, because you have not been the beacons of –

The SPEAKER: I remind the member for Albert Park again, as I remind all members, that it is not appropriate to use the word ‘you’.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, indeed the repeated use of the word ‘you’ is clearly in breach of the earlier advice that you gave to the house, which the member is ignoring.

The SPEAKER: Indeed. Members need to be conscious of not using that phrase.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (09:56): I support the member for Caulfield’s motion because it is urgent. It is urgent because the protest culture which we see in Victoria, which new Chief Commissioner of Police Mike Bush himself described as the protest capital of Australia – the government’s own appointment called Victoria that – poses a threat to the health and safety of members of Victoria Police, it poses a threat to members of the Victorian community, it poses a threat to the resourcing of Victoria Police and it poses a threat to the Victorian economy.

Last September do you remember the Land Forces protest? Do you remember that protesters threw acid at members of Victoria Police? They threw horse manure at members of Victoria Police and they threw bottles at Victoria Police. Twenty-four members of that distinguished frontline service were injured and needed medical care. Not only does this protest culture, which is only getting worse, pose a threat to the health and safety of not just our first responders – and I add, to the fine men and women of Victoria Police and members of our ambulance services and firefighting authorities – but it poses a

threat to the resourcing of Victoria Police, and that is why this bill is urgent. My friend and colleague the member for Caulfield has spoken about the 22,000 police shifts which have been spent on these violent protests. It is difficult to put a number value next to a police shift, but let us say a police shift on average to tend to these violent protests costs a thousand dollars. That is over \$22 million that could have been spent elsewhere in our justice system. Instead it is going to police thugs and to protect innocent bystanders and the Victorian people from violent protests, which are not a manifestation of democratic expression in our state.

Do you remember the violent protests around the Port of Melbourne? This bill that the member for Caulfield is trying to introduce is important because there are threats to our economy, and Victorians pay the price of that. If protesters violently blockade Webb Dock or Swanson Dock and stop essential medical supplies coming in or important goods and services reaching their destination in Victoria, that poses a threat to the Victorian economy, and Victorian families and businesses pay the price of that. Why is the government stonewalling? There are threats to health and safety, there are threats to Victoria Police resourcing, there are threats to our economy and our economic reputation at a time where other states in this country are looking –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, as you have already ruled, this is a narrow procedural motion, and the member on his feet is now debating a bill that has not even been presented to the house. I ask that you bring him back to the narrow procedural motion.

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Hawthorn to come back to the procedural motion.

John PESUTTO: That is why this bill is urgent, because there are serious threats facing the Victorian economy and the Victorian people. What this five-point plan does is strike the right balance. It corrects the balance. The government says that its anti-vilification laws will do the trick. They will not. They are reactive to events that have already occurred. What our five-point plan does is equip Victoria Police and other law enforcement agencies with the implements they need to be able to change the culture to protect Victorian households, businesses and our economy – move-on laws, a protest registration system, exclusion zones and face covering bans – all the while protecting the right to protest. What could possibly be wrong with that? Even our charter of human rights in Victoria, which has been a longstanding part of the statute books, only protects peaceful protest. So what is the hold-up here? Why the lack of an appetite to take action when our state stands to lose so much? Let us remember Victoria Police over a year ago actually supported a protest registration system. Now, that might change under the Chief Commissioner of Police, but I would ask the government to take on board the bill that the member for Caulfield is trying to introduce here. It is good for Victoria. It puts us on a par with the rest of the country, which long ago saw the good sense in making sure that balance between free speech and protecting the community is strong.

John LISTER (Werribee) (10:02): Our community is a vibrant and multicultural state where we can work and play free of harassment and intimidation. What we have seen recently with a series of concerning incidents out there in the community is a small minority of extremists who have made the choice to threaten the safety of others. While those opposite have raised precious points of order, trying to bring it back to the half-baked idea that they have brought into this house, I want to go to the procedure behind what they are trying to get to and talk a little bit more about what they have already done in this house which threatens the multiculturalism and vibrancy that we have in communities like mine in Wyndham. They have opposed anti-vilification laws and social cohesion bills. While the member for Brighton may be ready to spring up as I talk about this anti-vilification legislation, I think it is particularly important.

Last week I met with year 8s from Werribee Secondary College to talk about this legislation. We spoke about the roles of it when it comes to protests, and they understood why we need to have these laws. It baffles me that those opposite still chose to oppose it. Now they are out there with slogans that do nothing to protect Victorians. I saw the member for Caulfield out this morning doing a selfie video. I know they are trying to –

James Newbury: On a point of order, on relevance, this is not an opportunity to sledge, Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think that horse has bolted. Member for Werribee, come back to the procedural motion.

John LISTER: On the procedure of how this particular motion has been brought to the house, I am just showing my cynicism when it comes to their process over there in bringing this to the house while we are going through and working with our police to be able to come up with laws that meet their needs. They are trying to reach out to gen Z, who are reluctant to vote for them, with their selfie videos – jeez, what desperation.

Nicole Werner: On a point of order, Speaker – relevance.

The SPEAKER: I do ask the member for Werribee to come back to the procedural motion.

John LISTER: I am coming back to the process that has happened around that side bringing this law to Parliament. Let us turn to the origins of this rushed legislation from those opposite. Consultation through Mr Deery of the *Herald Sun*, who loves a leaked story from that side, is not how we bring legislation to this house.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I ask the member to table the speech that he is reading from.

The SPEAKER: Is the member for Werribee reading?

John LISTER: I am referring to notes.

The SPEAKER: Member for Werribee to continue.

John LISTER: What I will also do is refer to my notes, where I will read a quote from the Chief Commissioner of Police, Mr Bush. The new chief commissioner told the ABC:

We've had a look to see if it will be effective, where we've landed is that it's not worth bringing in ... these sorts of laws.

You are going against what the chief commissioner –

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, member for Werribee.

John LISTER: Pardon me – we have had that this whole debate. Those opposite are going against what the Chief Commissioner of Police has said himself. This goes to the process of this coming here. The Leader of the Opposition needs to be careful because they are openly ignoring Victoria Police's clear and repeated advice that protest permits will not help. They have been out of government so long that they have forgotten about the Victoria Police Act 2013 and section 10, which there have been actual reviews into from Liberal Party members actively defying that part of the legislation. Those opposite have form when it comes to crossing this line.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition! And the minister at the table!

John LISTER: We take our advice from the chief commissioner and his members because they are professionals when it comes to maintaining order and security. Those opposite could only dream of order and security in their own ranks. Now I think it is pretty – my apologies.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The minister is to stop banging the table. The member for Warrandyte has a point of order.

Nicole Werner: Speaker, my point of order is relevance over what the member for Werribee is speaking about. We would like to go back to the procedural motion at hand.

The SPEAKER: The member's time has expired.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (28): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Will Fowles, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway

Noes (51): Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Motion defeated.

Business of the house

Notices of motion and orders of the day

Notice given.

The SPEAKER (10:12): General business, notices of motion 21 and 22 and 68 to 82 and orders of the day 8 and 9, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Auditor-General – Planned Surgery in Victoria – Ordered to be published

A Statutory Rule under the *County Court Act 1958* – SR 75

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 76.

Bills

Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Council's agreement

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (10:13): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 without amendment.

Financial Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Council's amendments

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (10:14): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Financial Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 with amendments.

Ordered that amendments be taken into consideration later this day.

Motions

Motions by leave

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:14): I move, by leave:

That this house notes that it has now been 14 days since the Premier tabled an as yet undebated motion in so-called support of the Jewish community.

Leave refused.

Members statements

Geelong electorate public transport

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (10:15): As a lifelong resident of Geelong and having been the state member for almost 11 years, I have a good idea of the needs in the Geelong community and continue to advocate strongly on behalf of constituents. I am proud of the incredible people who work hard to ensure it stays that way. Whether it is those who volunteer to support and feed homeless people or those who continue to build the facilities the community needs or our teachers, nurses, doctors and firefighters or the First Peoples and multicultural communities who share their culture with us, Geelong is a welcoming and resilient city. This government has invested in revitalising central Geelong with the redevelopment of the Geelong Arts Centre, the Gordon TAFE, the new convention centre and the laneways project, to name just a few.

The proposal from the City of Greater Geelong's Mayor Kontelj to remove public transport in Moorabool Street is concerning, given that the bus users have clearly said they want the buses to remain in Moorabool Street, the centre of the city, to get to where they need to go. People travel into the city from all over the Geelong region for work, for appointments and for entertainment. Every vibrant city has accessible public transport running through it. It is the smart thing to do, particularly given that we want more people living in central Geelong. So I do not agree with the mayor's proposal to remove the public transport from Moorabool Street. In fact I believe it will cause further disadvantage and issues of inequality and does not recognise people in our community.

Early childhood education and care

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:16): Under Labor, Victoria's childcare system is in crisis. Despite clear evidence of a broken system, for three years the Allan Labor government has refused to act. Instead of working constructively with the Liberals and Nationals to prioritise children's safety, the Allan Labor government last sitting week voted down reforms to fix the broken childcare system. Our plan, Safe from the Start, sets out six urgent reforms to protect children and rebuild trust in the system. Children's safety should be the number one priority and focus. We will not wait for another review or another tragedy.

Don Lawson

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:17): It is not hard to describe Don Lawson OAM, a man of many passions, unwavering stubbornness and love for a good fight or cause. He was frustrating, a borderline genius, a stirrer and a chronic phone caller. He was a cracker of a person, who had a remarkable ability to make lifelong, enduring friendships, which was demonstrated by the large number of people who attended his funeral in person and online in Yea last week. Orchestrated by Don, the service went as he had planned, and I am sure he was annoyed to have missed an event where he knew everybody and could have stirred each of them up. Don, grandson of former Premier Sir Harry Lawson, was a giant in the agricultural industry and an industry leader in cattle. As an early adopter of technology, he loved genetics and was a nationally renowned pioneer of performance recorded livestock breeding. His passion for agricultural education and support for young farmers saw him continually lobby universities to lift their game. He was a great Liberal who fought against the north-south pipeline.

Container deposit scheme

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:18): I just want to give a shout-out to all the Knox residents who have now donated over 50,000 containers into reverse vending machines and into the container deposit scheme since it was first launched, putting \$5 million back into the pockets of locals, not-for-profits and everyone in between – such a massive milestone. This container deposit scheme since launch in Victoria has gone from strength to strength, and it is great to see it going gangbusters in Knox. Of course it was great to talk to the operator, Visy, in our area the other day, to hear that there will be another reverse vending machine coming to our part of the world to make it even easier to get your 10 cents back for a container.

Bayswater electorate

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:18): It was great to be out at one of my mobile offices recently in Ferntree Gully, joined by my wonderful office manager Pat Kelly. His lovely partner Steph Krueger joined along, and she even got involved in a conversation with a fantastic local talking about the energy transition – and in fact did a better job than I could have possibly done. So thank you to Pat and thank you to Steph for coming along and for making it an absolute banger of a day.

Kingsland Chinese Restaurant

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:19): If you want a succulent Chinese meal, then look no further than Kingsland Chinese Restaurant in Boronia. Graham and his family have been part of the Boronia community for around 35 years. It was great to get there with the federal member Mary Doyle and our teams to enjoy some Mongolian beef, some lemon chicken and some sweet-and-sour pork. Thank you so much to Graham and his wonderful family for making Boronia the wonderful, vibrant multicultural community it is.

Ray Dunstan

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:19): Ray Dunstan was a wonderful man who worked his way up from humble beginnings to build one of the most successful businesses in Wangaratta. Ray passed away earlier this month, with Isabel and their family by his side. A brilliant innings from Ray – he was just shy of his 96th birthday. Ray and Isabel have six children and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Ray was a community contributor through Lions and other organisations and a business leader to many. Isabel was always by Ray's side since they married on her 20th birthday, with 70 years of marriage and a fine family to show for it. Vale, Ray Dunstan.

Vietnam Veterans Day

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:20): This Monday 18 August is Long Tan Day, and I will take time to honour the veterans who served us well. The north-east is full of Vietnam vets who were conscripted to fight in jungle warfare in the late 1960s and 70s. Each year we honour men and women from Cobram to Yarrawonga and from Wangaratta to Bright. In a world where we can argue the pros and cons of the Gaza Strip, we must set all that aside as we honour those who fought in Vietnam. We never want to glorify war, but we want to never forget those who served our country when they were told to go. I encourage others to support these families.

Yarrawonga Health

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:20): Last week I was delighted to be amongst the Yarrawonga community to celebrate the opening of the \$10.9 million theatre at Yarrawonga Health. Bruce Pigdon cut the ribbon to officially open the new building, and it was a fitting honour for a man who has given so much to the Yarrawonga community. Yarrawonga is the fastest growing town in regional Victoria, and I continue to fight for new and improved services for this great town.

Tom Walsh

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (10:21): I would like to acknowledge Box Hill North resident Tom Walsh, who was recently awarded Whitehorse council's Young Citizen of the Year award. Last New Year's Eve 13-year-old Tom was relaxing at a beach in Venus Bay when he heard two girls calling out in distress after having been caught in a rip. Only recently qualified as a lifesaver and with just a single patrol weekend under his belt, Tom ran to the recently installed public rescue equipment station at the base of the beach walkway, pressed the emergency call button, grabbed the surf lifesaving rescue tube and swam out through the surf to bring the girls to safety. Without thought of personal risk, Tom displayed courage and bravery beyond his years to save the lives of these two young women. Tom, you are an outstanding and courageous young man and a credit to your family and the entire Box Hill community.

Maggie Timms

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (10:21): I would like to acknowledge a wonderful local businesswoman in my electorate Maggie Timms, who recently celebrated 45 years in business. In 1980 at just 21 years of age she opened her own salon on Station Street in Burwood and has been cutting hair ever since. For over four decades Maggie has been a trusted hairdresser and familiar face with many clients, some of whom remain loyal customers from the 1980s. She has served generations of families, with original clients attending the salon with their children, grandchildren and now even their great-grandchildren. On behalf of our community, thank you and congratulations on an amazing 45 years.

Surrey Park Swimming

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (10:22): I congratulate Surrey Park Swimming for another fantastic awards night last Saturday night and on the appointment of Janelle Pallister, a former Olympian, as the new head coach. We are looking forward to big times at Surrey Park.

Polwarth electorate roads

[NAME AWAITING VERIFICATION]

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (10:22): I rise today to pass my condolences on to the Beaton family in south-west Victoria, in Cobden way in Polwarth, who are recovering this week after the sad loss of a family member in yet another tragic car accident in south-west Victoria. With three deaths since March, not only are the Victorian regional roads terrible but south-west Victorian roads, the roads of Polwarth, are now quite dangerous. Sadly, this most recent accident was brought about by yet another tourist making the treacherous journey to the Twelve Apostles and Port Campbell district. But what frustrates the Polwarth community more than anything is that despite the fact we have arguably the worst roads in Australia that continue to take lives and damage communities – they are putting the tourism industry at risk, they are putting local communities at risk, they are putting local agriculture at risk – the community wants to know why this government cannot find money to fix potholes and make our roads safe with good quality signage and safety barriers, but instead finds \$128 million to build fancy toilets for tourists at the Twelve Apostles. This tourist facility is not known to the community; it has been kept secret. The shire does not know about it. The tourism industry does not know about it. Money is being wasted by this government while lives and families are put at risk on some of the most dangerous roads in the state. It is no good having fancy toilets if you cannot get there alive.

West Footscray Football Club

Katie HALL (Footscray) (10:24): The mighty West Footscray Roosters entered the Western Football Netball League in 1932, and along with their thriving women's team the Bokkers – get it? – and an incredible Auskick program, the club is a powerhouse of our community. A highlight of my first term in government was securing \$10 million in funding to fix their home ground at Shorten Reserve, which is comically lopsided due to being on an old landfill. I was recently contacted by club members concerned that as part of the redevelopment being led by the City of Maribyrnong the seniors

teams would have to be relocated to another ground. As a government we do not invest in infrastructure for less people to participate, and after conversations between Minister Spence, council and the AFL all parties have agreed on a solution that will allow the senior and junior sides to remain at the same ground. This is a fantastic outcome for the community, and a big thankyou to Minister Spence and Mayor Tiwari for their support.

Women's football

Katie HALL (Footscray) (10:25): This Saturday will be an incredible day for women's footy locally with the Bockers and Yarraville Seddon Eagles playing at Yarraville – on ya, Kel and Foxy. I cannot wait to toss the coin and watch my friends from both sides give it their best. This will be followed by the AFLW back at Whitten Oval on Saturday night. Get down, enjoy the new facilities, enjoy the best food in Melbourne in Footscray and grab dinner beforehand.

Ian Mence

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:25): Brighton lost a giant with the sad passing of Ian Mence OAM. For decades Ian was at the centre of the Brighton Liberal movement and guided the direction of our branch. As an entrepreneur in the timber industry who built his success through hard work, Ian loved our party and what it stands for. His commitment to our party was matched by his deep connection to Brighton. As the self-confessed 'president of the Church Street layabouts', Ian had held roles in local community activity, including with the Rotary Club of Brighton, Mayflower aged care and Brighton Grammar School. His service to the Brighton community was recognised by his awarding of a Medal of the Order of Australia. But above our party and our community, Ian's deepest love was for his sons Cameron and David and their broader family and his beautiful partner Suzie, or Suziepops to us. For the decades of service Ian gave, Suzie was always next to him with an endless smile. Vale, Ian Mence.

Glen Huntly Road crossing

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:26): In 2022 the federal government provided 50 per cent of the funding for a pedestrian crossing upgrade at Glen Huntly Road in Elwood through the road safety program. A crossing is needed. The site is dangerous. The site supports several schools and a childcare centre and is a pedestrian thoroughfare which joins both sides of the Elster canal walking path. Initial designs, two years ago, by the state department proposed a crossing 200 metres away from where it was needed. Since accepting they had got the site wrong, the state Labor government has sat on its hands and the federal funding. When are we getting the crossing?

Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (10:27): It was terrific to join representatives of Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health last Monday to officially open their refurbishment, made possible thanks to a \$3 million commitment from this government. To be able to walk into Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health and see the difference that these works have made is something that I think everybody should be incredibly proud of. I have had the opportunity to work really closely with Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health since being elected to this great place, and the staff and the dedication and the service that everybody offers our local community is absolutely extraordinary. I want to congratulate CEO David Wild, board chair Peter Donlon and the entire team, who do some incredible work making sure that our community is well supported. I was really pleased to be able to be with the entire team last week.

Level crossings

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (10:28): We marked, just a couple of weeks ago, the Sunbury line being boom gate free – a significant commitment made possible by the removal of level crossings on the Sunbury line. We continue to make sure communities are supported, are safer and are less congested.

Sir Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop Awards

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (10:28): Today I have the absolute privilege of celebrating 12 extraordinary young people from right across the Euroa electorate, each one a worthy recipient of the Sir Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop Award.

[NAMES AWAITING VERIFICATION]

I want to give huge congratulations to Angus Rowe, Claire Hemming, Gabrielle Mosley, Hunter Frederick, Hunter Aubrey, Lincoln Terry, Oliver Healy, Riley McKenzie, Rose DeFazio, Roxanne Clark, Tom Harris and Zoe Holden. Nine of these incredible students, along with their families, are here at Parliament today for this special moment.

This award is named after a true local hero, Sir Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop, a man whose name and legacy mean so much to our community. It is an award I am proud to support every single year because it recognises students who live by the same values Weary showed through his life, even in the most difficult wartime circumstances: compassion, courage, humility, leadership, integrity, friendship and forgiveness. These young people have shown all of that and so much more, whether it is in overcoming illness or the heartbreak of losing a loved one, excelling in sports, stepping into leadership, achieving academically or simply being that reliable, loyal friend that everyone can lean on. Some have faced challenges that many adults would find overwhelming, yet they have met them with incredible resilience and determination. While many of these students are still in primary school, their actions already speak volumes about the kind of leaders and citizens they are becoming. To the parents, guardians and teachers: thank you for the role that you have played in guiding and supporting them.

Umu Jalloh and Joanna Alqas Toma

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (10:30): I rise to recognise and commend two remarkable students from Kororoit who recently did work experience in my electorate office: Umu Jalloh from Copperfield College King’s Park campus and Joanna Alqas Toma from Springside West Secondary College. Umu is a passionate and articulate young leader who I first met during my visits at Copperfield College. During her five-day placement at my electorate office Umu immersed herself in the world of politics with both confidence and curiosity. One of the stand-out moments of her week without a doubt was meeting the Premier Jacinta Allan, a moment that she described as both inspiring and unforgettable. Umu joined me on several tours and events and gained firsthand insight into the role of a member of Parliament. She engaged in policy and community work with great interest, and she has left a lasting impression on both my team and me, and I have no doubt that her future will be bright. Joanna also approached her placement with professionalism, drive and a genuine passion for community engagement. She shared that this opportunity allowed her to see just how much thought and care goes into representing the community. Whether assisting with office work or attending public events with me, Joanna took the initiative and made the most of every opportunity to both learn and contribute. She spoke of being inspired by the work that we do to include young people in the conversation, and I can confidently say that she has a bright path ahead of her. I want to sincerely thank both Umu and Joanna for choosing my electorate office to do their work experience. Not only did they learn and gain insights but so did we.

Electric bikes and scooters

Tim READ (Brunswick) (10:31): I am going to ask members now to spot the difference. So far in 2025, 183 lives have been lost on Victorian roads but driving around in Victoria has remained largely the same. Also in 2025, precisely one e-bike battery caught fire on a train in Victoria, and now the government is proposing to ban all e-bikes and e-scooters from trains. This disproportionate response to risk suggests some hostility to people who get around without a car. I have heard from constituents and community groups who rely on taking their e-bike on the train for their commute as well as for recreation or tourism. This blanket ban will leave those people stranded or force them back into their cars. Meanwhile, the government’s own report acknowledges that fire risk stems largely from

noncompliant imported e-bikes and home conversion kits. Back in 2018 Coroner Audrey Jamieson recommended that the state government better regulate noncompliant e-bikes but she was ignored, and now the government wants to ban all e-bikes and e-scooters, even compliant ones. This is a major overreaction and a misguided attempt to solve the real problem of home conversion kits and unsafe imports which, by the way, are a workplace safety issue for delivery riders. E-bikes are here to stay, and a good government would safely facilitate this transition instead of running away from it. This ban should not go ahead.

Mountain District Learning Centre

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (10:33): Originally a women's co-op, Mountain District Learning Centre in Ferntree Gully has been serving the community for over 51 years. Over that time it has broadened to provide opportunities to people from all walks of life, including our young adults. MDLC runs a cottage program for students who need some extra support outside of their mainstream school from years 7 to 10, and its latest exciting venture has been the creation of The Avenue School this year, a specialist senior secondary school which is supporting students requiring alternate secondary pathways. These young people are thriving in a nurturing environment that supports their individual learning journeys, and it was absolutely wonderful to tour with the Premier the other week and speak with the staff about the profoundly positive impact that The Avenue is having on these young adults' lives. Great thanks to the Premier for taking the time to visit this jewel in Ferntree Gully's crown, which has supported the community for over half a century.

Belgrave ambulance station

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (10:34): It was also fantastic to welcome the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services at Belgrave ambulance station in Tecoma last week to meet with my fabulous local paramedics and discuss their work servicing the people across the hills. They are the first metropolitan station in Melbourne to have received a new four-wheel drive ambulance, which can handle the tricky terrain of our unsealed local roads and some pretty perilous driveways. They absolutely love their vehicle. They also discussed their continuous training, ensuring their skills are always refreshed and relevant. They really are incredible frontline workers. I give my thanks to them today and every day.

Belgrave Community Pharmacy

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (10:34): The minister and I also popped into Belgrave Community Pharmacy to discuss the incredibly successful community pharmacist program. Cheers to all.

Wildlife road strike

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (10:34): I rise to again highlight the distressing and cruel plight of kangaroos and other local wildlife that are currently being killed by vehicle road strikes in increasing numbers along Wellington Road in Lysterfield and Rowville.

Since I first raised the kangaroo road strike death toll along Wellington Road during the last sitting week, many further concerned local community members and wildlife advocates have contacted me to express their deep concerns, not only relating to animal welfare but also from a road safety point of view. Sue Johnston of Sue's Roos Kangaroo Rescue has kindly provided me with an update on numbers. For the month of July, 84 kangaroos were hit, killed or later euthanised on Wellington Road in Rowville and Lysterfield, bringing the total 2025 toll to 180 kangaroos and 17 wallabies. Local wildlife rescue heroes, including Sue and Vicki Clark, among others, are desperately pleading for help to stem the high kangaroo death toll. Again, a special thanks goes to those rescuers for their amazing work, including often continuing care of surviving orphaned joeys. Urgent road safety mitigation measures that are being called for include variable message signs, VMS, to warn drivers of frequent kangaroo crossings, permanent flashing warning signs, motion sensors and electronic virtual fencing

to warn kangaroos of pending danger. These measures have been previously used successfully to reduce road strike kills on the road.

Servants of the Two Hearts and Reaching Out Because We Can

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (10:36): I recently had the privilege of attending the annual charity fundraiser held by Servants of the Two Hearts and Reaching Out Because We Can at the Sandown racing club in my electorate. I would like to commend their effort in transforming stored food at the racecourse, food that would otherwise have gone to waste, into much-needed meals delivered to the many vulnerable in our community at the Noble Park Community Centre every Tuesday. Their efforts to make a difference in the community through their partnerships are commendable and have been delivered with compassion and without discrimination to so many in my electorate and beyond. The endless hours and support these charities provide our most vulnerable are commendable, and I wish to thank Sister Margaret Mary, Elisa Mineo and their hardworking staff and volunteers for their love and sacrifice for our community.

Waverley Meadows Primary School

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (10:37): I also recently had the immense pleasure in planting trees for Waverley Meadows Primary School for National Tree Day. Seeing future generations using their green thumbs and getting their hands dirty is always inspiring and gives hope for the future. The Allan Labor government remains committed to building a sustainable and environmentally friendly Victoria by working towards an ambitious 2045 net zero target. I want to express my gratitude towards Waverley Meadows Primary School for their continued contribution towards this goal and for all the hard work of the staff, teachers, students and parents.

South Barwon electorate infrastructure

Darren CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (10:37): It is with some pleasure that I rise this morning to highlight the record investment that has been made into the South Barwon electorate, supporting the population growth of this key growth corridor of Geelong. Recently I had the opportunity to catch up with a civil construction worker who is hopeful that their future employment will be attached to stage 2 of the duplication of Barwon Heads Road. This \$300 million project, jointly funded by the Allan Labor government and the Albanese government, will make it much easier and much safer for the Armstrong Creek community to be able to connect into their workplaces in Geelong and surrounds. This significant project builds on the first stage of Barwon Heads Road – a \$400 million-odd project – is vital infrastructure to help support this rapid-growing regional growth corridor and builds on the record investment of the Allan Labor government into the South Barwon community over the last few years. I commend this project to the house.

Jan Millington

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (10:39): A fitting honour to a remarkable, caring, all-heart member of the Inverloch RSL, the ever so exquisite Jan Millington, was being the first woman awarded life membership at this wonderful sub-branch. Described as a warrior for veteran welfare, she has held myriad leadership roles – secretary, welfare officer and membership officer – and made an exemplary contribution on both the special events and social committees. Her unwavering dedication has always ensured the needs of members are met and the RSL remains a pillar of support in the veteran and wider community. Jan also leads Inverloch Legacy as president, honouring the century-old pledge to support veteran's families with an abundance of compassion and empathy. Thank you, Jan, for serving those who have served our country. You exemplify the spirit of community and care.

Linda Goltz

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (10:40): A true treasure to the Bass Coast community, thank you, Linda Goltz, for 38 years of extraordinary service. Trained at the Royal Melbourne, then off to the Queen Vic, out to Monash Clayton and on to Wonthaggi – a midwife working also in the surgical

ward – being multiskilled in country hospitals paramount. From welcoming new life to supporting the elderly, leading emergency care and transforming services, Linda's career radiates compassion, skill and a passion for learning. 'Knowledge makes you versatile' – wise counsel no doubt etched on a wall somewhere. A positive change catalyst, Linda transformed Armitage House into a rehab unit, led maternity and maternal and child health teams, guided the ED through COVID and headed urgent care in Cowes. Thank you, Linda, for your extraordinary service. We are thrilled you will continue to share your expertise at the community hospital while enjoying your love for spinning and weaving.

Middle East conflict

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:40): Many residents of the Thomastown electorate are extremely distressed about the war raging in Gaza and the indiscriminate killing of defenceless civilians. I have been to a number of events in the electorate to hear from Australian medical doctors returning from Gaza and families of people still in Gaza. Just a week ago a father came to me asking for assistance to get his children out of Gaza; they all had Australian visas but could not get through the border. The next day I received news that his 17-year-old son had been shot in the head, and the day after that I was told he passed away. In the words of our federal government, Gaza is in the grip of a humanitarian catastrophe. Israel's denial of aid and killing of civilians, including children, seeking access to water and food, cannot be defended or ignored. There is now an overwhelming number of countries, including Australia and most civil society, condemning these acts by the Israeli government. Many members of the Labor Party, including the Thomastown branch, led by Labor Friends of Palestine, have been campaigning in support of recognising the state of Palestine and further sanctions against members of the Israeli cabinet, illegal settlers and any military arrangements. I want to thank them for their work.

On 11 August the federal government stated that Australia will recognise the state of Palestine at the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in September. Thomastown residents have asked that I record thanks while also acknowledging this alone will not stop the killing and the stealing of land. The International Court of Justice has also made statements deliberating on whether Israel is committing genocide, but that decision is a long way away. To the people from Gaza living in the electorate of Thomastown who have relatives still living and those dead, I cannot imagine your grief, but your advocacy and strength are so powerful when we stand with you.

Yoorrook Justice Commission

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women) (10:42): I rise to update the house that last month the Allan Labor government tabled the Yoorrook Justice Commission's final report – a historic moment on our path to truth-telling and treaty. The report concluded the work of the commission, established in partnership with the First Peoples Assembly to investigate injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria since colonisation, including the impact of past and current government policies and actions. This is the first formal truth-telling inquiry of its kind in Australia, and the commission's work will have significant impact on helping all Victorians better understand our history. The government acknowledges the immense undertaking of the commissioners and the commission staff in preparing these historic reports, and I give a shout-out and thanks to the head commissioner Aunty Eleanor Bourke.

We acknowledge the strength and courage of those who made submissions and gave evidence to the commission, and we share the Yoorrook Justice Commission's goal of truth and justice and will carefully consider the commission's final findings and recommendations. *Yoorrook Truth Be Told* is the official public record of Victoria's history from the start of colonisation. It is a culmination of engagements with more than 9000 First Nations peoples, 208 witnesses, 65 public hearing days and more than 1300 submissions.

Narre Warren North electorate women's football

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:44): We are heading into sports finals time, and I want to congratulate the Endeavour Hills women's football team. They have won 17 games in a row. They are heading into the grand final in two weeks time undefeated – the best women's team, I would say, in the state, but I may be a bit biased. They have gone absolutely undefeated, a champion team. I am really looking forward to them bringing home the trophy for the second year in a row.

I also want to congratulate the Hallam women's team. They did not come home with the chocolates last week. Unfortunately they did miss out on getting through to the grand final. They are another championship women's team that are doing so well and had an amazing season, with a number of the girls playing huge milestone games.

As we head towards the footy season finals, we are going to congratulate all the teams in Narre Warren North and say thank you so much for all that you do for our community and for our clubs. You really are completely amazing.

Tea with your MP

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:44): I want to also thank everyone that came to my Tea with your MP last Friday. It was a huge success. Everyone had great conversations. Look out for my newsletter which is coming out in a few weeks with a few more dates.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members to use correct titles, which also includes only the title and not the member's name after the title. Secondly, I would like to remind us all about Speaker Andrianopoulos, who told us in 1999 that gestures are disorderly, followed by Speaker Lindell in 2007, who asked members not to thump the table. Do not thump the table.

Statements on parliamentary committee reports**Public Accounts and Estimates Committee*****Report on the 2024–25 Budget Estimates***

Jess WILSON (Kew) (10:45): I rise to make a contribution on the report on the 2024–25 budget estimates by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee tabled on 31 October 2024. Today I wish to draw the house's attention to one particular finding of the committee. Finding 46 states that:

The total estimated investment (TEI) of almost half of the Department of Transport and Planning's existing capital projects had changed in the 2024–25 Budget compared to the previous budget. The TEI of the North East Link accounts for \$10.4 billion.

Just as this total estimated investment continues to change under the Allan Labor government's complete mismanagement of our major projects – nearly \$50 billion worth of cost blowouts to date – so do the specifics of the projects themselves. In terms of the North East Link, it is causing great concern for my local constituents. In September 2024 the Minister for Planning signed off on the urban design and landscape plan for the North East Link freeway upgrades between Burke Road and Tram Road. Attachment 5 to this document – on page 69 to be precise – shows the noise walls to be installed along the freeway around the intersection of Bulleen Road in North Balwyn. I reiterate that this is the version of the UDLP signed off by the minister in 2024. You can imagine the alarm of many North Balwyn residents then when in May this year the North East Link Program letterboxed a pamphlet containing a diagram of the noise walls that differed, in some cases quite substantially, from the original UDLP that had been signed off by the minister. In particular, a noise wall extending some way south along Bulleen Road has been completely removed. Other sections of the noise walls that were listed as being 10 metres high in the UDLP are now listed as being in the range of 3 to 9 metres. There are various other apparent inconsistencies between the UDLP and the May 2025 update that I could share with the house.

The minister has given me assurances in this place on the many times that I have raised concerns around the North East Link and the construction phase and the fact that it continues to cause a great, great impact on local residents – much as a result of the complete mismanagement of the project. We have seen, obviously, the mismanagement of the project when it comes to the cost blowouts, but what has become apparent throughout the construction phase is the complete unwillingness of the North East Link Program and the minister and the government at large to actually listen to the concerns of my local residents and to ensure that there is transparency around decision-making on this project – a project that is going to cost Victorian taxpayers \$26 billion. It started off at \$5 billion as a promise, escalated to \$10 billion, escalated again to \$16 billion and then overnight the Premier announced another \$10 billion project. A piece of road that is one of the most expensive in the world is having massive ramifications for my local community in terms of the construction phase and the ongoing impacts of what is going to be a major road network in Melbourne, and my constituents time and time again get no answers from this government, get no support from this government.

I have raised this with the minister a number of times, and I have shared her response with residents who live in the affected areas along Bulleen Road, and they are unconvinced to say the least. Having reviewed the UDLP myself, I can understand how these goalposts have been shifted without any community consultation – a hallmark of the Allan Labor government.

I will be holding a forum to hear directly from the residents about their concerns in relation to these apparent changes. I extend an invitation to the minister to come and to hear directly about the impact that the change to the noise walls will have on residents' local amenity, on their ability to enjoy their own homes. It is my hope that the government will be willing to work and to uphold their promise to local residents that the noise walls will be installed to a standard that ensures that they can continue to enjoy their homes and their lives. This is a government that fails to listen, and it is time it started listening and responding to resident feedback.

Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Inquiry into Workplace Surveillance

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (10:51): I rise to make a contribution on the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's report *Inquiry into Workplace Surveillance*, which was tabled on 13 May this year. This report focuses on workplaces with workers who find themselves in situations where there is surveillance undertaken while they are at work. It was something that caught my eye when I was looking through the list of the many reports that have been tabled in this place over the last 12 months, because if I cast my mind back a couple of months – it could be six months – I was in Laverton North and I attended a United Workers Union picket line with hundreds of workers out the front of a Woolies distribution centre in my electorate. I turned up to speak to locals – they were mums and dads living in my electorate who had secure work at this distribution warehouse in Laverton North – just to find out what was going on and what they were doing there. I think they had been locked out of work and were at the picket line 24/7. It went on for some time – I am going to say days, but it could have been weeks; I cannot quite remember.

The conversations that I had with some of those workers were specifically around workplace surveillance. I must admit that at the time I had no idea that they were working there in this warehouse under 24/7 surveillance, including every time they had to go to the bathroom. These were just your average mums and dads. They were pretty vulnerable; I would say a lot of them came from multicultural backgrounds. Many of them had worked for this company for a long time and had been doing this work for a long time. They enjoyed doing the work and they were keen to go back to work. But one of the issues that they had – and the reason they had decided to strike and were there on that picket line – was that they were under enormous stress and pressure and had been enormously unhappy over the last couple of months at work. A lot of that and a lot of those conversations centred around workplace surveillance.

They were able to convey to me just how stressful it is knowing that you are being watched 24/7 and having your manager come and have a ‘friendly chat’ to you about how often you went to the bathroom and how long you spent in the toilets. Imagine having a minister that could see that you had gone into a bathroom and needed to talk to you about how long you had been in the bathroom. The people I spoke to found that incredibly demeaning and dehumanising and, quite frankly, I think they were right. When I saw that the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee –

A member interjected.

Sarah CONNOLLY: It is. I used to be on that committee when the chair was the Honourable John Eren. I think it was one of the first committees I was on here in this place. It was wonderful to see that they had done a deep dive into workplace surveillance. Some of the things in the terms of reference they looked at were the effectiveness of current privacy and workplace laws when it comes to workplace surveillance; the current practices of employers; the manner in which surveillance data is collected, stored, disclosed and disposed of, because, remember, you are being watched at work; the ownership of the surveillance data; the protection of the privacy, autonomy and dignity of workers; the personal impact – I thought this was important – of workplace surveillance on Victorian workers, such as their physical and mental safety; and the impact of workplace surveillance on the balance of power in the workplace and the effect on workers rights.

There were some tremendous findings and fantastic recommendations that came as part of this report, and I know that those workers there at that Woolies distribution centre may never see this report. They may never read these findings and recommendations, but the recommendations in this report would afford them better protection in their workplace – more appropriate protection from an employer that, yes, does use surveillance to increase productivity and efficiency. I think one of the findings that came out in this report was that that efficiency and productivity is questionable. It is a great report. I recommend that everyone read it.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2024–25 Budget Estimates

Kim O’KEEFFE (Shepparton) (10:56): I rise to speak on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report on the 2024–25 budget estimates. The budget is a reflection of the severe neglect of regional communities, and regional Victorians deserve so much better. Despite the rhetoric, this budget is full of cuts, deferrals, neglect and missed opportunities. The government boasts about investment, but when you dig into the figures, as PAEC has, it is clear much of the investment is either re-announced funding or projects suffering from chronic cost blowouts and cuts across the board. One thing I do want to point out is that the budget again includes cuts to the regional development fund, which was reduced by 50 per cent from \$211.5 million to \$106 million. Since 2020 the regional development fund has plunged by 80 per cent, taking much-needed funding out of regional communities. Regional Victoria is made up of 25 per cent of the population, yet we only get around 13 per cent of the budget. It is a total disgrace that this government neglect the regions when we do so much of the heavy lifting when it comes to agriculture, manufacturing and business, and particularly transport. Regional communities deserve and need fair investment into their communities, whether it be health, housing, roads, education or essential services. This government need to govern for all Victorians.

When it comes to health, the budget includes a headline \$11.5 billion for hospitals and \$8.8 billion in long-term funding, but PAEC’s findings make it very clear that much of this is too little, too late for regional providers. GV Health has been pushed into severe financial deficit. Their situation was laid bare during PAEC’s hearings. This is not a temporary setback but a reflection of systematic underfunding and cost pressures impacting regional communities. GV Health provide essential care for thousands across the Goulburn Valley, yet despite increasing demand they are expected to operate under financial constraints that threaten both service levels and staff retention. When hospitals are

running in the red it is a reflection on the Allan Labor government's disastrous management of the health system.

Let us go to the lack of maintenance and repairs and the terrible state of our roads. My electorate has crumbling, unsafe roads and a primitive road network, but it is no surprise that we have so many neglected and dangerous roads when there has been a 93 per cent cut in road maintenance and a 14 per cent decrease in road resurfacing. There are still many roads in my electorate that are in a state of disrepair, crumbling, full of potholes and dangerous. Whilst we have seen some roadworks, there are still many more roads in desperate need of repair that are dangerous and putting lives at risk. We have seen some of the work done to a very poor standard, with constituents bewildered that anyone would think that that standard of work would be acceptable. Just yesterday a constituent posted photos of the Murchison-Tatura Road, which is a total mess, full of deep potholes and crumbling. Alarming, this is a major truck and transport route. The Shepparton-Numurkah road is another busy road full of dangerous potholes, and just this week travelling to Melbourne on the Goulburn Valley Highway I saw there are still many dangerous potholes without warnings. Cars are getting damaged and lives are put at risk. Constituents are stressed and feeling unsafe having to navigate the dangerous roads.

I wish to touch on transport. My electorate has been calling for a bus review to meet the growing bus transport needs of the region. It has been 15 years since we have had a bus review, and it is well overdue. The electorate has grown significantly over that period of time, and there are many towns that have limited bus services or no bus services at all. Infrastructure Victoria puts Shepparton as the number one location in need of a bus review. This is an advisory body to the government. The council have also called on the government to support this review as a major priority. But no, the government have not committed to this review, and I urge them to do so. It is impacting significantly on the lives of people in the Shepparton electorate who need to get to where they need to go.

Stage 3 of the Shepparton rail line upgrade, which was due to be completed in 2023, still has not been started. This will take our much-needed services from five to nine daily. Due to the lengthy delay, travellers are forced to travel on overcrowded trains, many not getting a seat on the 2½-hour trip. This is just another example of project delays that impact significantly on regional communities.

Another section of the committee report I would like to just touch on is the policy issue around housing and the budget cutbacks. Victoria is in the midst of a housing crisis. Rents are soaring, homelessness is increasing, and home ownership is becoming more and more out of reach. The so-called Big Housing Build is drastically behind schedule and over budget. According to PAEC's own report, delivery targets are not being met and communities are being left waiting. Housing shortages and homelessness figures continue to rise, and this government continue to ignore the desperate housing needs across the state, with my electorate having one of the largest and highest rates of homelessness in the state. The PAEC report reveals the neglect, significant failings and financial mismanagement of this government felt by every Victorian.

Environment and Planning Committee

Inquiry into Securing the Victorian Food Supply

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (11:01): It is an absolute delight to speak on our Environment and Planning Committee's report regarding the inquiry into securing the Victorian food supply. I am further delighted that the government has just released its response to this report. It was tabled last sitting week. When I saw that, I jumped at the opportunity to speak on this, because food systems have not just been a real interest for me since I first started to consider what I was putting into my body when I fell pregnant 22 years ago but were literally part of my everyday living when my business was centred around food and the supply of it here in Victoria. For a good seven years I owned and operated my organic mini supermarket. I spoke with farmers and wholesalers on an almost daily basis over that time, which gave me a really strong and clear understanding that our food systems operate under challenging and difficult conditions, not least of which are the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events on our farmers and food supply. Couple that with urban sprawl taking over old market

gardens, and it is evident that we cannot let our food supply as a state just tick along. We must ensure that we, as a government, set the conditions and parameters to ensure that the food that feeds us is produced in the best possible conditions, which means close to population centres, such as that 100-kilometre radius around Melbourne, and also on the best arable land possible.

Soil is everything, and not all soils are the same. I am of a vintage that I remember the old Castrol GTX oil ad ‘Oils ain’t oils’, and I can say that soils ain’t soils. We need to protect the best of the soil that we have there. I see some nodding heads – we all remember that. It was apparently 1988, that ad. Of particular interest to my constituents across the district of Monbulk is the future of our green wedge land. The vast majority of my electorate sits within a green wedge zone across two local government authorities, which are Yarra Ranges council and Cardinia shire. Many, especially those in the eastern Dandenong Ranges area, have expressed concerns to me that the farming land, particularly in Cockatoo and Gembrook, may be at risk of becoming useless by being subdivided into allotments just too small for farmers to generate enough income to be sustainable.

Our inquiry looked at this. It was a concern shared by many others who came before our committee from all parts of the state. I want to speak about recommendation 5:

That the Victorian Government ensure that updates to the State Planning Policy Framework undertaken as part of the *Planning for Melbourne’s green wedges and agricultural land: Action plan 2024*:

- strengthen the planning policy imperative for protecting all agricultural land from inappropriate development to secure Victoria’s food supply
- define key policy concepts to improve the interpretability of agricultural policies
- acknowledge the value of small peri-urban farms, as a source of:
 - local food supply and economic activity
 - regenerative land management practices
 - diversity and resilience in Victoria’s food system
- encourage innovative farming practices and development which enhances the productivity and viability of farming in peri-urban areas.

Before I continue on, I just want to say thanks to the secretariat and my fine committee members. I have thanked them before when I have spoken on this. Thank you in particular to the witnesses and farmers, who are pretty time poor. They gave up their time to tour us on their properties or to come and give witness evidence to us, and for that we are eternally grateful, because it was their source of information that helped inform this. I just wanted to give them a bit of a shout-out.

I do want to acknowledge that the Victorian government’s response on this recommendation – in fact on the vast majority of the recommendations – was to support it in full. The Victorian government is progressing related reforms under the action plan. The planning policy framework, PPF, will be amended to strengthen protections for all productive agricultural land across Victoria. This will support food security and reduce rural land fragmentation by establishing settlement boundaries to manage growth appropriately.

The government will remove ambiguous terms like ‘strategic significance’ and ‘economic importance’ from agricultural policies in the PPF. All productive agricultural land will be recognised as valuable, and decisions will continue to be guided by integrated decision-making principles. The PPF will reinforce the value of peri-urban farms for local food supply, economic activity, regenerative practices and food system resilience. Councils will be supported to reflect this in local policy through planning scheme amendments. Councils will be directed to encourage innovative and sustainable farming practices through the PPF, including the use of recycled resources like water and biogas, to support viable and productive farming in peri-urban areas. This will be music to the ears of many who understand the significance of protecting this agricultural land and ensuring it is viable for sustainable food production. As I have before, I commend the report to the house, but I am also grateful for the recommendations.

Economy and Infrastructure Committee*Inquiry into Workplace Surveillance*

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (11:06): I am pleased to rise today to speak on the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's inquiry into workplace surveillance. It was a committee that I was on for quite a time, and I enjoyed my time on that committee with my fellow members. I say a big thankyou to the secretariat, who did an enormous amount of work. We had an enormous amount of public interest in this particular subject.

When we talk about workplace surveillance and the way workplaces are more diverse now, we always have to look at balance. What we did find out through this committee is that sometimes the balance could have been skewed one way, and maybe not fairly. We sit back and we talk about the worker's right to privacy, and we certainly support that right, but we also talk about the employer's right to have his workplace surveilled, for want of a better word. Not all workplaces have surveillance to watch workers; they have surveillance because they need to check for theft and break-ins and all those other things that unfortunately happen in workplaces. I can say when I employed people on building sites I had surveillance on worksites not to look at what the blokes were doing or whether they were sitting too long in the toilet or having a smoke behind the shed; although they were builders – they could smoke anywhere and it did not matter.

Tim Bull interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: Yes, it was me, member for Gippsland East. You are 100 per cent right. But it was more for theft at night and to catch those who would come in and steal stuff at night; that is what it was about. When we were in the committee I was listening to the hearings, and I heard a story about a person that was on WorkCover. Something happened at work, and they ended up on WorkCover. What surprised me – and it surprised me it did not appear in the recommendations – was that when a workplace incident happens, the employer is not necessarily obliged to give that footage over. Out of all the stuff we listened to in these committee hearings, that particular point shocked me. It shocked me for two reasons. As an employer, if I had the surveillance, I would give it over straightaway to WorkCover to either support the claim of the worker that has been injured or find out for whatever other reason that accident occurred. To me, it is common sense: if there is a workplace accident and you have the footage, hand the footage over.

We have got to remember WorkCover and WorkCover premiums are there for a reason. If you get injured at work, you are covered. I do not know why any employer would resist giving that information over unless there was gross negligence on his behalf. And to be honest, if those employers are doing that, well, stuff them – they probably do not deserve to have employees, because in my mind, and I have said this before in this chamber as a builder, you never want to make that phone call to someone to say their partner has been injured or their child has been injured. That is deadset, rock-solid simple – you do not want that. I understand accidents happen, not always through negligence of the employer and not always through negligence of the employee. Sometimes stuff happens for no reason. It could be someone slipped. That can occur in any workplace, and it is not through anything other than that.

I was actually surprised when I read this that that recommendation was not in there – the recommendation that should say that employers have to give over that footage straightaway in case of a workplace accident. I think it is very, very relevant in this case.

As I said, in everything we do in this chamber, in every law we put through or any piece of legislation, we have to find the balance, and we know that workplaces have changed. We know that employers have a right to have workplace surveillance; that is fine. We also know that employees have a right to privacy. The Commonwealth are going through workplace surveillance issues at the moment; they are looking at that. It was put forward that the ACT has a very good model. But I will note that in the minority report they said the Victorian government should wait until the Commonwealth have done their part, which I also agree with; there is this balance right through. But my big recommendation and

my own personal recommendation is that the government should look at legislating vision on workplace safety.

Environment and Planning Committee

Inquiry into Securing the Victorian Food Supply

John LISTER (Werribee) (11:11): Sometimes work in this house can be a bit of a hungry job, and so today I am speaking on the Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee's *Securing the Victorian Food Supply* report, because it is important to reflect on how some of the findings and recommendations from this report apply to my community on the edge of Wyndham, on that western boundary of our metropolitan community and our peri-urban community. I thank the chair of the committee the member for Wendouree and other committee members for their work on this report. The report looks at population growth and urban sprawl, which is something I know all too well in Wyndham, and shows that Wyndham is one of the fastest growing LGAs, with our whole population across Victoria to rise above 10 million people by the 2050s. As someone who lives in Werribee and represents the expanding outer west, this growth is quite evident, and with my community being one of the youngest in the state, the question of food security for future generations is an important one to consider, not only for the future but for what we are doing now. I will talk about two aspects of that in this report.

I want to take the opportunity to highlight some of those findings and recommendations that go particularly to the idea of protecting our peri-urban communities and urban fringe as well as food security, especially for communities like mine that are low socio-economic communities, where sometimes putting food on the table is one of the greatest challenges. I recently had the pleasure of meeting with representatives from the Little River Action Group. While they formed to fight against plans for a container terminal proposed to be built by Pacific National in the township – a single issue – their concerns have gone far broader now and deeper than just this one issue. One of the amazing features of the township is the rural lifestyle and unique grassland environment around it, all while 15 minutes from our urban boundary and the fastest growing suburbs in Victoria. The committee's findings 13 to 18 of the report, relating to the impact of our growing city on our peri-urban environments, are particularly pertinent to the Little River community. Our green wedge on the western side of Melbourne is not only home to environmentally significant grasslands but also long used for grazing livestock. Near the coast, we have a significant amount of Victoria's fresh vegetables – and a fun fact for the house is that 70 per cent of Victoria's lettuce comes from the Werribee South area.

The committee has concerns about the impact of land banking in particular, and the Little River Action Group has also raised this with me. They have seen this land banking by private developers and the management of that land after it has been purchased, with weed control and preserving wildlife corridors of particular concern. I therefore welcome the committee's recommendation 5, that the government works to ensure that updates to our planning policy framework are undertaken as part of that, to strengthen those planning controls, to look at key concepts to improve agricultural policies around those areas and also to look at the value of those small peri-urban farms as a way of bolstering our food system. I have also taken their concerns to the Minister for Planning, and I thank her for her support for our community as we not only grow but also enhance and protect what makes the different corners of Wyndham unique.

I do also note Wyndham City Council's responsibility for managing our green wedge in the western municipalities. Recommendation 9 goes to the need of a review for these plans across our municipal areas responsible for green wedges. The *Western Plains South Green Wedge Management Plan* was completed in 2018, and while it is comprehensive, I think it is time to review the plan and make sure that any changes to land ownership and management that have happened in those years since are monitored.

I look forward to working with Wyndham City Council on initiating an update for this plan with the Little River community. I thank the Little River Action Group for meeting with me, and I look forward to working with them into the future.

I also want to turn to the issue of food security in our community, albeit briefly, but it is a really important thing. The committee's finding 27 is of interest to my community, particularly around providing more food bank programs. I recently did a visit with the minister at the table, the Minister for Agriculture, to our food bank at Wyndham Park Community Centre. Through our government's investment of over \$50,000 to the program at the centre, they are not only able to access groceries through Foodbank but also supplement it with locally grown fresh produce and food from their community gardens to help give a better diversity and range of food that they provide. I welcome this finding from the committee and hope to see more examples of this through our next round of grants for food banks in Wyndham. Part of securing our food security is also securing water in Werribee South, and I welcome the government's efforts on this side to help secure water for Werribee South and continue to have that as one of the prime agricultural parts of our state. Thank you to the committee. I look forward to working with community partners on our food security and protections for our green wedge.

Bills

Domestic Animals Amendment (Rehoming Cats and Dogs and Other Matters) Bill 2025

Statement of compatibility

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (11:17): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Domestic Animals Amendment (Rehoming Cats and Dogs and Other Matters) Bill 2025:

Opening paragraphs

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the **Charter**), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Domestic Animal Amendment (Rehoming Cats and Dogs and Other Matters) Bill 2025 (the **Bill**).

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

Overview

The main purposes of the Bill are to amend the *Domestic Animal Act 1994* to repeal the foster care registration scheme under Part 5B of that Act and provide for an authorisation scheme for pet rehoming organisations. The new scheme will provide for councils to be informed about animals in foster care in their municipal districts and provide for the collection of information about outcomes of efforts to rehome dogs and cats by the authorised pet rehoming organisations.

It also includes:

- an amendment to section 74(2) of the *Domestic Animal Act 1994* to clarify that authorised officers have the power to enter any part of a premises (including a backyard), excluding a building that is occupied as a residential home, and any vehicle that is not used as a residence (e.g. campervan or caravan) in order to determine compliance with the Act, regulations, licences and notices to comply.
- an amendment to ensure there is clear authority for regulations to prescribe a class of dog for which reduced registration fees are payable.

Human Rights Issues

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

The right to privacy (section 13 of the Charter), property rights (section 20 of the Charter) and the right to a fair hearing (section 24 of the Charter) may be relevant to the Bill.

In practice, it is likely that the Bill's provisions relating to the new pet rehoming authorisation scheme will mostly regulate entities rather than natural persons. To be able to apply for authorisation under the new scheme an applicant must provide the applicant's ABN and confirmation of Charity registration with the Australian

Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. The applicant may be an incorporated entity, an unincorporated entity or a natural person. Corporate entities are not considered a ‘person’ under the Charter and as such, do not engage human rights specified in the Charter.

For the following reasons, I am satisfied that the Bill is compatible with the Charter and, if any rights are limited, those limitations are reasonably and demonstrably justified having regard to the factors in section 7(2) of the Charter.

Right to privacy (section 13 of the Charter)

Section 13(a) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not have their privacy or home unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

Part 4 of the Bill inserts a new requirement for the Secretary to maintain an information register (pet rehoming register) which will contain information pertaining to a pet rehoming organisation including the names and contact details of the person or persons who are or will be responsible for administering that organisation. Persons whose information must be included in the register are those who have voluntarily chosen to participate in the scheme.

New section 68ZJ in clause 39 of the Bill will enable certain persons to inspect, in accordance with any regulations, information on the pet rehoming register. These persons include –

- the Secretary or a person employed in the Department, acting in the course of the Secretary or person’s duties under the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*;
- a Council or person engaged or employed by the Council acting in the course of the Council or person’s duties under the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*;
- a departmental authorised officer or a Council authorised officer acting in the course of the officers duties under the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*;
- a person responsible for administering an authorised pet rehoming organisation for the purpose of providing information regarding the organisation as required under the *Domestic Animal Act 1994* or regulations;
- an animal shelter or Council pound for the purpose of providing information in accordance with the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*, regulations or a business code of practice.

Access to the information is to either enable those persons to undertake their duties or, in the case of non-governmental employees, to access and update their own data. As such access to the information on the pet rehoming register is limited to legitimate purposes.

New section 68ZK provides that the general inspector, as identified under section 18(1)(b)(ii) under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*, may request in writing that the Secretary provide the general inspector with information from the pet rehoming register that relates to the fate and location of an animal under the management and direction of an authorised pet rehoming organisation. Information disclosed under this new section does not include personal information of natural persons and therefore does not limit the right to privacy.

Under clause 42, members of the public will have access to source numbers of pet rehoming organisations for the purpose of purchasing or obtaining a cat or dog. The source number assists members of the public to ensure that animals they purchase or obtain are from a valid source.

The right to privacy may also be engaged by amendments to section 74 of the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*, which enables authorised officers to access any premises other than a building occupied as a home or any vehicle that is not used as a place of residence. The purpose of this access is to enforce compliance with the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*, regulations and other instruments issued under that Act. Excluding buildings occupied as a home and vehicles used as a place of residence from the scope of the power, reduces any impact on the right to privacy.

The collection and disclosure of information for the purposes of the pet rehoming register is neither unlawful nor arbitrary. It is limited to clearly defined circumstances and for a legitimate purpose. Similarly, the powers conferred on authorised officers to access premises is clearly defined and is therefore neither unlawful nor arbitrary. Therefore, in my opinion the right to privacy is not limited.

Property rights (section 20 of the Charter)

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with law. For the purposes of section 20, property includes all real property interests recognised under the general law. This right relevantly requires that powers which authorise the deprivation of property are conferred by legislation, are confined and structured rather than unclear, are accessible to the public, and are formulated precisely.

For property rights to be limited, any interference must constitute a deprivation of property. International jurisprudence indicates that a deprivation of property will extend to include a substantial restriction on a person's use or enjoyment of their property.

Clause 45 of the Bill amends section 74(2) of the *Domestic Animal Act 1994* to clarify that an authorised officer may enter any premises other than a building occupied as a home, or any vehicle that is not used as a place of residence, for the purpose of enforcing compliance with the Act, regulations and other instruments issued under that Act. It is important that authorised officers have clear powers to access premises to enable timely action to be taken under the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*, for example, to seize animals that may pose a threat to public safety.

While this may restrict a person's use or enjoyment of their property, it is confined to circumstances clearly set out in legislation and for a legitimate purpose. The amendment does not remove the need for an authorised officer to obtain a warrant before entering into a person's private home.

Therefore, in my opinion the amendment does not limit property rights under section 20 of the Charter.

Right to a fair hearing (section 24 of the Charter)

Section 24(1) of the Charter relevantly provides that a party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the 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. This right may be engaged by new section 68KF, inserted by clause 7 of the Bill, in relation to revocation of pet rehoming organisation authorisation. In relation to decisions to issue or renew a licence, unless a decision determines existing rights, it is understood the fair hearing right is unlikely to apply. Accordingly, the Secretary's power to revoke an authorisation – which is similar to a licence – in clause 7, revokes an existing interest and therefore could engage the right to fair hearing. In any case, the Bill applies various procedural fairness safeguards to a decision to revoke an authorisation. New section 68KF(2) requires the Secretary to give notice to the holder of an authorisation and to consider any response made by the holder of authorisation before making a decision to revoke an authorisation. New section 68KF(3) requires the Secretary to give notice of a decision to revoke, including reasons for the decision. On this basis, the right to a fair hearing may be engaged but is not limited by the Bill.

Ros Spence MP
Minister for Agriculture

Second reading

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (11:17): 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:

I am pleased to rise to speak on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Rehoming Cats and Dogs and Other Matters) Bill 2025.

The Victorian Government recognises the valuable services provided by Victoria's pet rehoming sector.

We are committed to supporting the sector and its people, most of whom volunteer their time and dedication to take in, rehabilitate and find new homes for cats and dogs in Victoria. This Bill has its origins in the Taskforce for Rehoming Pets, which our government established to investigate and recommend ways the government could improve and further support the rehoming of dogs and cats in Victoria.

The Bill demonstrates the government's commitment to implementing all 17 recommendations the Taskforce made in its final report.

This Bill formally recognises, for the first time in our state, the significant contribution that Victoria's pet rehoming organisations make in finding homes for cats and dogs.

The Bill delivers on five recommendations of the report from the Taskforce on Rehoming Pets.

This includes recommendations to implement a regulatory framework which creates a voluntary authorisation scheme for pet rehoming organisations. This scheme would achieve two key improvements:

- First, organisations authorised with the scheme can access specific benefits to reduce financial burdens and enhance rehoming opportunities for animals under their management.

- Second, organisations authorised with the scheme must meet certain requirements including the reporting of animal fate data, harmonising requirements amongst all pet rehoming services including shelters and pounds.

A growing number of cats and dogs in Victoria need new homes, and it is vital that local and state government have a better understanding of where these animals are, and how they're being rehomed.

Extensive consultations with the pet rehoming sector over the past 4 years has informed the Bill and the regulatory framework it proposes.

A Rehoming Pets Working Group was established, comprising representatives from community pet rehoming organisations, pounds, shelters and local government, who have provided their advice and input.

Surveys and workshops with pet rehoming organisations have also informed these important reforms.

I take this opportunity to thank members of the Rehoming Pets Working Group and all those who have contributed their advice and input to date.

Overview of the Domestic Animals Amendment (Rehoming Cats and Dogs and Other Matters) Bill 2025

Preliminary matters

The Bill provides for delayed commencement of 10 April 2027, but some Parts can be proclaimed earlier than 10 April 2027 where required.

The proposed commencement period is intended to support the development of subordinate instruments and to enable Agriculture Victoria, local governments, pet rehoming organisations, and shelters and pounds to transition to the new arrangements.

This Bill will establish the Pet Rehoming Authorisation Scheme.

This scheme will enable charitable pet rehoming organisations to apply to the Secretary of my department to be authorised.

Authorisation will be granted subject to certain conditions imposed by the Secretary and/or prescribed in regulations and remain in place for no more than 3 years, at which time a pet rehoming organisation could apply to renew its authorisation.

The Authorisation Scheme will be voluntary for pet rehoming organisations, with benefits offered to incentivise their participation.

If a group chooses not to become an authorised pet rehoming organisation, they will still be able to operate, but they could not access these benefits, which I'll speak about shortly.

The Bill provides for the State Government to undertake the administrative, regulatory and compliance functions for the Pet Rehoming Organisation Authorisation scheme.

Subject to the Bill passing, regulations will set out additional requirements that authorised pet rehoming organisations must meet.

These requirements will include reporting on the location of animals under the care of an authorised pet rehoming organisation and may include mandatory pre-adoption activities such as desexing and vaccination, or the reporting of animal fate data to government.

Setting these requirements will improve animal welfare outcomes for cats and dogs in the rehoming sector and enable pet rehoming organisations to demonstrate their high standards of animal management and care.

The Bill proposes to repeal the current voluntary Foster Care Registration Scheme from the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

There has been very low take up of the Foster Care Registration Scheme since its introduction as part of the puppy farm and pet shop reforms we made in 2017. Acknowledging this, and the sector-identified need to recognise organisations rehoming cats and dogs, rather than individual foster carers, the Bill will remove the Foster Care Scheme.

Instead, the Pet Rehoming Authorisation Scheme will centralise animal foster care activities under authorised and regulated rehoming organisations; whether they are an authorised pet rehoming organisation, or an animal shelter or pound.

Foster carers will continue their valuable role in the cat and dog rehoming and care process, but the proposed changes will alleviate regulatory and administrative burden for volunteer foster carers and recognise the critical role of pet rehoming organisations.

The Bill will require the Secretary to keep and maintain a Pet Rehoming Information Register to record the granting, renewal or cancellation of the authorisation of pet rehoming organisations.

This Information Register will support notification requirements from pet rehoming organisations to state government and local government.

The Information Register will also support the reporting requirements of pet rehoming organisations, pounds and shelters to state government on the fate of animals in their care.

A central repository for all reporting information requirements of the Pet Rehoming Authorisation Scheme will eliminate administrative complexity and burden for authorised organisations, most of which are led and operated by volunteers.

The Bill proposes a range of amendments to the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* to support the rehoming activities of organisations that participate in the Pet Rehoming Authorisation Scheme.

These amendments include enabling authorised pet rehoming organisations to hold adoption days to rehome cats and dogs at pounds, animal shelters and at pet shops.

The Bill will enable pet rehoming organisations to hold adoption days in pet shops that are prescribed as domestic animal businesses under the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

This will provide similar rehoming opportunities to pet rehoming organisations as are currently available to pounds and shelters.

Adoption days at pet shops will provide a wider exposure to animals available for adoption by authorised pet rehoming organisations, and support the rehoming of more animals.

Pet rehoming organisations will be able to promote their activities on these adoption days, and to educate the community about the rehoming work they do.

This is not a relaxation of Government policy in relation to the sale of dogs and cats at pet shops. Strict conditions will apply to adoption days held by pet rehoming organisations at pet shops.

Current minimum age requirements for the sale of cats and dogs at these events will remain unchanged, at 6 months for dogs and 8 weeks for cats.

Consistent with current offences set out in the Domestic Animals Act 1994, penalties will apply to any authorised pet rehoming organisation that sells or gives away a dog or cat at a pet shop under these ages.

Notification and reporting requirements are proposed before an adoption day and to confirm ‘sales’ after an event, which aim to support compliance and monitoring by the state government and local councils.

Authorised officers will have powers to shut down adoption days if they reasonably believe the welfare of animals is at risk.

The Bill also provides for benefits which are aimed at reducing the financial and administrative costs for scheme participants. The scheme allows for participants to access an exemption from registering foster cats and dogs with their local council for the first 12 months an animal is held in foster care, while a permanent home is being sought.

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires the owner of a cat or dog to register an animal with their local council if the animal is over 3 months of age.

Our consultation with pet rehoming organisations highlighted that registering cats and dogs in their temporary care with their local council can be a financial and administrative burden.

Many animals are coming into their care often for only short periods of time, which means that council registration can be cost prohibitive.

The exemption from registering an animal in their care with the local council for the first 12 months will alleviate cost and administration pressures for authorised pet rehoming organisations.

An authorised pet rehoming organisations will be issued with a 3-year, **no-cost source number** via the Pet Exchange Register to match the period the authorisation remains in place. This will remove the need for scheme participants to renew and pay for a source number every year, as is currently the case.

The Bill also provides a head of power to prescribe the types of organisations that local councils can enter into agreements with to undertake animal management activities such as giving animals to pet rehoming organisations to facilitate and permit permanent rehoming.

These agreements, known as 84Y agreements, are currently available to local councils.

This change will not impact the ability of local councils to enter into agreements with other rehoming partners such as animal shelters and veterinary clinics.

The Bill also provides for an authorised pet rehoming organisation to have limited access to inspect the Victorian Declared Dog Register, to review the declared or menacing status of a dog surrendered to them.

Providing limited access to the Declared Dog Register is necessary, as it is intended that pet rehoming organisations be prohibited from rehoming dogs declared on the Register, consistent with requirements for pounds and shelters which are prohibited from rehoming aggressive or antisocial animals.

To appropriately manage privacy and information security, an authorised pet rehoming organisation will not have access to all information on the Declared Dog Register, or be able to amend information on the Register, such as the identifying information of a dog owner.

An authorised pet rehoming organisation will only have access to the Declared Dog Register to determine the status of a dog.

Organisations that choose not to participate in the Pet Rehoming Authorisation Scheme will not be able to access these benefits.

Those organisations will still need to meet the requirements of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and local laws, including registering animals in their care.

For non-authorised pet rehoming organisations, failure to meet these requirements could result in penalties or offences under the relevant legislation.

Definitions

The Bill replaces the definition of *community foster care network* with pet rehoming organisation.

The term pet rehoming organisation more accurately describes the activity of the sector, which is made up of organisations that label themselves as community foster Care networks, rescue groups, or pet adoption groups.

These groups conduct the same core activity; that is, arranging temporary housing for cats and dogs in private residential premises, and seeking permanent homes for these animals.

The term pet rehoming organisation is more inclusive than community foster care network, and reflects the entire sector and its activity.

Minor consequential amendments to three other sections of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* will also be made to support this change.

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission registration

The Bill sets out that a pet rehoming organisation may apply to the Secretary for authorisation on the condition the organisation is registered under Part 2-1 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (Commonwealth).

The key principles set out in the Victorian Permissions Framework were considered during the development of the Pet Rehoming Authorisation Scheme. The Permissions Framework was also applied throughout the development of the draft Bill.

The Bill includes two additional amendments to the Domestic Animals Act 1994 to clarify two minor issues in relation to Powers of Entry and Registration Fees.

Powers of entry

The proposed Bill amendment will clarify that authorised officers may enter whole or part of any premises, excluding a building that is occupied as a residential home.

Specifically, this amendment will clarify that authorised offices can enter a residential backyard.

Currently, section 74(2) of the Domestic Animals Act sets out the arrangements for entry by authorised organisations exercising a power under sections 72(1), (1A) or (1B) – to determine whether the Act and its regulations as well as licences and notice to comply are being complied with.

The Domestic Animals Act prescribes that authorised officers may at any reasonable time and by any reasonable means, and with any assistance which an authorised officer require entry to any premises or part of a premises not occupied as a place of residence or any vehicle; or search the whole or any part of any premises or any vehicle.

The phrase ‘premises not occupied as a place of residence’ as described has given rise to legislative uncertainty as to whether an authorised office can enter a residential backyard. This change will remove any legislative uncertainty and clarify this provision to align with the original intention of the section.

Authorised officers currently require a warrant to enter the inside of a home. There is no intention to change this requirement.

Reduced Registration Fees

Regulation 13 in the Domestic Animal Regulations 2015 is currently relied on to allow microchipped hounds registered with the Game Management Authority to qualify for a reduced registration fee with councils.

To ensure there is clear authority for the regulations to provide for these reduced registration fees, the Bill will amend the Schedule in the Domestic Animals to clarify that regulations can prescribe a class of dog that is entitled to a reduced registration fee. This amendment will also remove current inconsistencies and ambiguity within the DA Act, specifically within the Schedule, about whether all animals that are microchipped (other than dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs) are entitled to a reduced registration fee with councils. This is a legacy issue. Microchipping was once a criteria that made an animal eligible for a reduced registration fee. However, microchipping has been compulsory for 20 years. All animals should now be microchipped. It is now inappropriate for microchipping to be legislated as a criteria for a reduced registration fee.

Other currently listed criteria for dogs that are eligible for a reduced registration fee would not change.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (11:18): I move:

That debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until 27 August 2025.

Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Sonya Kilkenny:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (11:19): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025. I will just recap for the house and for *Hansard* on how we got to where we are with bail laws in this state. Victoria used to have quite strong bail laws. They were strengthened considerably under the former Liberal–Nationals government because community safety was a priority to us. Under Labor there was a bit of weakening of some of those laws, under I think it was Attorney-General Pakula. Then we had the horror of the Bourke Street tragedy, and bail laws were significantly strengthened again, and that was the right call.

But then we saw the government, under then Attorney-General Symes, take the view that bail laws were too strong in this state, and the Labor government made the decision to deliberately weaken Victoria's bail laws. This took effect from March last year. The government ignored the warnings from the opposition and the police and others. The government believed it knew better. The government believed that weakening bail laws was somehow going to protect community safety. The consequences of that weakening of bail laws became pretty obvious pretty quickly, and we saw criminals becoming emboldened. We saw criminals being arrested for serious violent offences, bailed and released only to commit the same offences time and time and time again. The government got it wrong, and the government kept refusing to admit it got it wrong. How many times? Three, four, five times this side of the house sought to bring in changes to bail laws to reverse some of the worst of the weakening of bail laws that had been undertaken by the Allan Labor government, and every single time members opposite stood up and blocked those changes being brought in – every single time.

This government put politics before community safety. It weakened bail laws. It saw that damage was being done in the community, and it refused to allow the opposition to bring in laws to fix up their mess. Eventually the polls started to turn; we know the only thing that drives members opposite is the polls – it is not about community safety at all. The spin doctors got in the Premier's ear and told her she had a real problem with this, a real problem with community safety – Victorians do not feel safe because Victorians are not safe. We keep hearing from members about perceptions of crime. Well, perception is based on reality. Victorians do not feel safe because they are not safe. They are not safe on the streets. They are not safe in their homes, they are not safe driving their cars down the streets. Because Victorians are not feeling safe, the government finally felt compelled to act. But we know that when it comes to this government, it is not what they say, it is what they do.

We saw the first tranche of attempts to repair some of the damage done earlier this year. I could not quite believe it when I saw the bill. It was the Bail Amendment (Tough Bail) Bill 2025. The gall of this government to put the phrase ‘tough bail’ into a bill title just shows you everything you need to know about the fact that this government is obsessed with spin and is not about substance, because, number one, the bill was not tough on bail at all. It was not even close. The bill did not even reverse the changes this government brought in March last year, which led to a massive spike in repeat violent offending by offenders in this state. It did not even reverse those changes, so they were not tough at all. I was very pleased – notwithstanding that we were here until about 2 o’clock in the morning, member for Gippsland East. It was something like that. It saved me from watching Carleton get done at the MCG, so there was probably one upside to that late night.

A member interjected.

Michael O’BRIEN: I will ignore that interjection. The one change we did succeed in persuading even the left-wing crossbench in the other place to support, the one amendment of mine that they agreed to, was to delete the words ‘tough bail’ from the name of the legislation. because even the leftie crossbench could not cop that. We wanted to strengthen the bill. We were not able to get those substantive changes through, but we did succeed in at least removing that pantomime of a title. Just as a matter of parliamentary procedure and practice, the idea of inserting political slogans into the title of legislation is pretty off. I am pleased, at the very least, that the government, in introducing this Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025, seems to have walked away from this performative nonsense of trying to put political slogans in the titles of legislation, because it is really quite demeaning to this Parliament. I would say that to all sides of Parliament. Frankly, your legislation should speak for itself. It does not need to have political slogans – you know, focus group workshopped phrases – stuck into the middle of titles of bills.

But what did the bill that passed actually do? Well, not all that much. The government promised to have the toughest bail test in Australia. That was not in that bill. The government said, ‘Well, we’re going to reintroduce the offence of committing an indictable offence whilst on bail,’ and it is true they did that, but it is without any consequence, because it used to be that the offence of committing an indictable offence whilst on bail was a schedule 2 offence. The effect of that was that if you did commit an indictable offence whilst on bail, you automatically faced a tougher test to stay on bail. On this side of the house we say that is the way it should be. If you get the privilege of bail and you abuse that privilege by committing a serious offence or you are charged with committing a serious offence while you are on bail, you should face a tougher test to stay out in the community because you have already given up the chance you have got. You have abused the chance you have been given. But no, this government does not believe that, so it has reinstated an offence of committing an indictable offence whilst on bail but not as a schedule 2 offence, which means effectively it has no consequence.

The government also reinstated the offence of breaching bail conditions, but again not as a schedule 2 offence, so there is no practical consequence for anybody who is charged with breaching a bail condition in terms of making it harder to stay on bail. Remember that the previous offence was not an unreasonable one; in fact the actual offence was breaching a bail condition without reasonable excuse. For example, if somebody had a curfew as part of their bail conditions and there was a train strike or some train derailment and they could not get home and they missed their curfew by 45 minutes, nobody was getting charged with that. Nobody was going back on remand because their train was delayed. So there was always that sensible release valve, if you like, of ‘without reasonable excuse’. But the government said, ‘Oh, no, that’s still too tough, so we’re going to nominally reintroduce the offence but with no consequence for bail.’ So it is still weaker than it was in March last year.

The government retained the loophole for under-18s, so if you are an under-18 and you breach your conditions of bail it is not even an offence. If you are under 18 and you breach your conditions of bail, it is not an offence under Labor. Explain to me how that sends any message to young offenders that they need to be accountable and that they need to keep to the conditions – and we are not talking about necessarily minor conditions. The conditions can be serious conditions. They can be not to approach

witnesses. It can be about reporting to police on a regular basis. It can be not associating with certain people. Conditions are a very important part of bail. But this government says if you are under 18 you do not even need to keep to your conditions because you cannot be charged with an offence for breaching them.

Tim Bull: Disgraceful.

Michael O'BRIEN: It is disgraceful, member for Gippsland East. While the government actually call these bail laws tough bail laws, they are about as tough as a roll of Sorbent. That is how tough they are. The government still refuses to make burglary and robbery schedule 2 offences. Under this government burglary and robbery are the sorts of crimes you can engage in and get the weakest, easiest test to get bail. That is the way Labor thinks you protect the community. Well, Labor could not be more wrong.

For all the performative slogans we hear from this government, bail laws in Victoria are still weaker than they were in March 2024, and we are seeing the consequences of that on our streets every single day, because this government does not have the heart to actually introduce strong bail laws. It wants to be seen to be responding to community concern, but its heart is not in it. It does not want to actually see bad people locked up, and the same government philosophy which led to the weakening of bail laws is still there. It is still riding the government, but they have to pretend to dress it up.

That is where we are today, and now the government has this Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 before the house. I will talk about some of the less central changes. It provides that the statutory review of bail law changes, which, if it is to occur, must also consider their impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons. I do not know if there is a need to specify that, because I would have thought that any statutory review would consider their impact on all relevant persons, but we do not object to clarifying that. The government bill also provides that where the Bail Act requires surrounding circumstances to be taken into account by a bail decision maker, this includes the accused being pregnant or having caring responsibilities. Once again, I would have thought that was something that does not necessarily need to be specified. I would have thought that any bail decision maker would be considering all those matters as a matter of course, but the government obviously feels there is a need to set that out and specify it, and we do not object to that so far as it goes.

The government is prohibiting the electronic monitoring of bail conditions by private companies, subject to certain exceptions. This is a government that is pretty much asleep at the wheel, because it allowed the courts to work with private electronic monitoring companies, some of which were run by people of not necessarily the highest repute. Some of these companies went under and some of these companies did not do what they told the courts they were going to do. For a government that is pretty left wing, the whole notion of saying that you can buy your way to bail – because if you are rich enough to be able to afford to sign up to a private electronic monitoring company, you can get bail; if not, you are on remand – I would have thought there was a pretty strong equity argument against that in the first place.

The fact this government left it for so long and allowed this practice to arise before the courts says to me that we have had attorneys-general for too long under this Labor government who have really been asleep at the wheel. They have not been watching what has been happening, and as a result we have had people who should have been properly monitored who were not. We have had people who arguably should not have been given bail who were, and that does not keep the community safe. The government is belatedly now moving in this bill to clean up its own mess by prohibiting the use of electronic monitoring of bail conditions by private companies, subject to certain exceptions.

In terms of some of the changes that the government is introducing, we are going to hear a lot of rhetoric from the government about how we have got the toughest bail test in the country – it is not. This new high degree of probability filter which is to be applied to the unacceptable risk test for bail is essentially exactly the same as the high degree of confidence test that New South Wales uses. The

government seems to think that they have reinvented the wheel, and they expect the Victorian people to be sort of showering rose petals in their path because they have come up with a new test called ‘high degree of probability’, when in effect what they have done is they have just looked over the shoulder of Chris Minns in New South Wales, who has got the test there of ‘high degree of confidence’ and borrowed that.

Steve Dimopoulos interjected.

Michael O’BRIEN: The minister at the table says that they are applying it to everyone. Yes, but it is only for six offences. It does not apply to any other offence. I am quite pleased the minister raises this. It is not actually a new test, because for the six specified offences, which are armed robbery, aggravated burglary, home invasion, aggravated home invasion, carjacking and aggravated carjacking, those tests will still be subject to the normal two-step process. The first step of that two-step process is usually a show compelling reason test. There the onus is on the applicant for bail. They need to show the bail decision maker, but in these sorts of cases it will be a court, that there are compelling reasons why they should be granted bail, so the onus is on the applicant, and that is entirely proper. What the government says is if they pass that first test, then there is a second test, which is an unacceptable risk test. The onus for this is on the police – it is the police that need to satisfy the court that the person poses an unacceptable risk.

So what the government says here is: for these six offences, if you have committed one of these offences or you are charged with one of these offences you get bail, and then if you are charged again with another one of only those six offences, the unacceptable risk test is modified – effectively saying that the bail decision maker has to be satisfied there is a high degree of probability that the person will not commit another one of those offences. It is not actually a new test, it is a modification of the unacceptable risk test, and it only applies in circumstances where somebody has been charged with one of those six offences, gets bail and then is charged again with one of those six offences.

Jackson Taylor interjected.

Michael O’BRIEN: Well, it is still the unacceptable risk test, member for Bayswater. It is still the unacceptable risk test. It is a show compelling reason test as step one, and then it is the unacceptable risk test as step two. It is simply a modification of the unacceptable risk test; it is not a new test at all. If the government had wanted to introduce a new test, it could have done so. The government could have done it in a way which applied to a broader range of offences. When the government says, ‘Oh, it’s the toughest test in the country’ – no, it is not. It is just a copy and paste from New South Wales, and it only applies to six particular offences.

Of course this government cannot simply increase tests or make it harder for bad people to get bail – no, they have to weaken bail laws at the same time. What the government does not talk about in this bill is its weakening of bail laws in this same bill. What we see is that the government says, ‘Well, look, we are going to uplift the bail test for those charged with certain indictable offences while already on bail for an indictable offence, but we’re going to carve out a huge raft of indictable offences where you won’t face a tougher test.’ Before this government weakened bail laws in March last year, if you were on bail for an indictable offence and then you were charged with committing an indictable offence whilst on bail you automatically faced the tougher bail test – you automatically faced the show compelling reason test.

What the government has done is say, ‘Here is a whole list of offences in schedule 4 and in schedule 5 where you don’t face the tougher test, even if you are on bail for an indictable offence and then you commit another indictable offence while you are on bail.’ It is quite an extraordinary list of offences which the government has carved out and said, ‘You don’t face a tougher test for bail.’ The government says, ‘Oh, look, we’re very concerned about crimes of poverty,’ and I get that, but explain to me how proceeds of crime – money or property worth \$10 million or more – is a crime of poverty. Seriously, how many people deal with proceeds of crime worth \$10 million or more as an act of

poverty? But that is what this government does there in schedule 4, carving it out for a weaker bail test. If you are dealing with proceeds of crime worth \$10 million or more, you get a weaker bail test. Explain, for the love of God, how that keeps any Victorians safe. Explain the logic in that, if you can.

Tim Bull: That will not be in their speaking notes.

Michael O'BRIEN: No, it will not be, member for Gippsland East. How about possessing a tablet press, possessing precursor chemicals, possessing controlled drugs or possessing controlled precursors? These are the sorts of offences that are committed by drug producers and drug traffickers, not people with a little bit of possession for personal use. We are talking about major drug dealers, organised crime and bikie gangs. But this government has carved all these offences out and said, 'You won't face a tougher test for bail for these offences.' Again, explain to me the logic for carving out drug offences by bikie gangs and organised crime for weaker bail tests. These are not crimes of poverty, these are organised crimes, and this government is deliberately going weak on them. It is absolutely disgraceful.

The government says in schedule 5 there are certain limitations. Theft of a motor vehicle of any value – yes, that faces a higher test. Theft of property worth at least \$2500 – yes, that faces a higher test. Destroying or damaging property where the property is worth at least \$5000 or the damage is worth at least \$5000, that faces a higher test – but not if it has been marked with graffiti.

In other words, you can cause damage to someone else's property through graffiti and even if it is more than \$5000 worth of damage, you will face no tougher test for bail. It makes very little sense. This government, as I said, love carving out and weakening bail laws, even under the guise of strengthening them. I do ask members opposite to have a look at the list in schedule 4 of this bill, have a look at all those offences which the government says it is carving out, so if you are charged with these offences while you are on bail, you will not face a tougher test. We are talking about drug production, drug trafficking – major crimes, serious offences – and this government is saying it is going to make sure that it is easier for people to get bail. It makes no sense at all.

Look at the default commencement date for this bill. We face a crime crisis, notwithstanding the current Treasurer, the former Attorney-General, famously saying at a press conference that she was not going to talk about a youth crime crisis that does not exist. I do not hear too many members opposite repeating those words, that we have a youth crime crisis which does not exist. They were the words of the then Attorney-General, now the Treasurer. We have not just a youth crime crisis, we have got a crime crisis full stop. The government says that the default commencement date for this bill is 31 March 2026. Well, the minister at the table says default. How long have we been waiting for the anti-vilification changes to come through there?

Anthony Carbines interjected.

Michael O'BRIEN: No, we did not vote for them, because you did a dirty deal with the Greens to make sure the DPP could block any charges. The minister and the government did a dirty deal with the Greens to deliberately gut the criminal provisions of those anti-vilification laws. When they come in, they are going to do nothing, Minister. They are going to do nothing to keep Victorians safe on the streets. They are going to do nothing to stop the hate, the antisemitic vilification we see day in and day out on the streets of Melbourne. The reason they are not going to do anything is because the government chose to do a dirty deal with the Greens rather than work with the coalition – that is the reason. I am grateful for the minister's interjection.

Every time this government introduces these changes to criminal law it waits until the default date. We saw it with the fatal strangulation laws. We are seeing it with the anti-vilification changes – we are seeing it with everything. When this government says the default commencement date is 26 March next year, take them at their word. When people show you who they are, believe them. This government is not going to do anything on these laws until the end of March, and that is a disgrace, because Victorians need action now. I note that the coalition put out our 'break bail, face jail' policies.

Anthony Carbines: How did they go?

Michael O'BRIEN: They have gone very well, thank you, Minister – very well. I know they have gone well because they are strong enough that not one single element of them has been picked up by this government – not one single element of the Liberals' and Nationals' 'break bail, face jail' policy has been picked up by this government. We will reinstate the offence of committing an indictable offence whilst on bail as a schedule 2 offence, triggering a bail uplift. We will reinstate the offence of breaching bail conditions as a schedule 2 offence, requiring offenders to show compelling reasons to be granted bail again. We will remove the loophole for youth offenders who breach bail – we will end that free pass for the under-18s – and we will list robbery and burglary as schedule 2 offences, meaning tougher bail tests apply. Not a single one of those elements is in this bill. I move:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted and replaced with the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the Allan Labor government:

- (a) urgently provides Victoria Police and Corrections Victoria with all resources necessary to implement this bill without further delay; and
- (b) adopts the Liberal and National parties' 'break bail, face jail' policy to ensure that Victoria's bail laws do not continue to fail to protect community safety.'

I moved the reasoned amendment because the government has claimed the reason for this long lag in implementing this bill, this 26 March next year default commencement date, is because Victoria Police do not have the resources and Corrections Victoria do not have the resources. This government has just shut down Port Phillip Prison. If this government is worried about having places to keep bad people who are dangerous people and keeping them off the street, the government could have just not closed down Port Phillip Prison. But no, this government is more interested in playing games than keeping Victorians safe.

The government keeps talking about how keeping Victorians safe is its number one priority. Well, it is time for this government to act like it. What, \$13 million for some machete bins? I am fascinated to see how that is going to work. I am fascinated to see how many thugs are going to roll up to the \$13 million machete bins and put it in –

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Michael O'BRIEN: They are more likely to get a cash a can than they are a machete for recycling. Let us see. They can find the money for \$13 million machete bins, but they cannot find the money to reopen one of the 43 police stations they have closed down, including my one in Malvern, Minister for Police. They cannot find the money. They cannot find the money to reopen prisons with prison guards to keep Victorians safe and to put people on remand who deserve to be there.

This should not have a default commencement date of 26 March next year; it should be implemented as soon as possible. That is why my reasoned amendment calls on the government to give the resources we need to Victoria Police and to give the resources we need to Corrections Victoria to make sure that the minor positive changes – apart from the weakening – can be implemented without any further delay. Victorians should not have to wait until March next year to see the weakening of bail laws, which they have suffered under this government, being slightly arrested.

We also call on the government to implement the opposition's policies on 'break bail, face jail', because if they are serious about wanting to keep Victorians safe, that is the way to do it. That is the way to do it. It is not rocket science. It would actually be doing a lot of what previous governments, both Liberal and Labor, had agreed on and that was keeping Victorians safe. But no, this government run by bleeding hearts is more interested in keeping criminals on the streets than keeping Victorians safe in their own homes. That is the reality, and we see it. Even when they try and improve bail laws to a minor degree, they cannot do it without also saying, 'We're going to go weaker on a whole lot of other bail laws.' I look forward to hearing why somebody having \$10 million in proceeds from crime

is a poverty offence and why therefore they should have a weaker test for bail. I look forward to hearing from members opposite about holding precursor chemicals for drug production. What, is that a poverty offence as well? No, it is an organised crime offence. Why are we going weak on organised crime and drug traffickers and people trying to sell poison to our kids?

That is what this bill is doing. It is weakening bail laws, not strengthening them. It is weakening them, and there is no need for it. The government could have taken the minor positive changes in relation to the six nominated offences and just be done with it. But no, the government cannot do that without weakening a whole other raft of bail laws. Mark my words, this will come back to haunt the government. I do not care about the government, but I do care about Victorians. When we start seeing the weaker aspects of these bail laws flow through the system and organised criminals – drug traffickers, drug producers and people with \$10 million or more from proceeds of crime – getting bail because this government have weakened the bail laws, I look forward to hearing the government justify why they have weakened the bail laws and why they have put ideology before keeping Victorians safe.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (11:49): I am very pleased to rise to speak on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025. I commend the member for Malvern for seeking to distract from the very purposeful elements of this bill, which are really fundamentally underpinning the rationale for the changes being brought forward. It is extremely serious subject matter. Yes, there was a bit of flourish and drama to his contribution – I get that, with ‘break bail, face jail’ and other slogans that they are continuing to run – but substance is at the heart of this, and I would hope that we would have a very serious debate. It is a really difficult discussion to have. It is an unpalatable discussion because we are talking about, on the one hand, very serious offences and how they are managed and also about preventing and curbing intergenerational poverty in our state.

So I think conflating some of the offences that have been mentioned is a little mischievous, because we really need to look at the core of the reforms being implemented.

I will just diverge for a second to go a step back in history. When we are talking about some of the reforms that were brought in a little while ago, looking at deaths in custody and other aspects that those opposite conveniently always avoid – because clearly it is not a priority for them – the fact that it is always avoided in any discussion of criminal matters I think is disgraceful, because it is an oversimplification of the complexity of managing these kinds of reforms and offences. I think just a little bit of humility in that regard would be appropriate to respect the nature of the reforms that we are speaking to.

We are delivering the toughest bail laws in the country for high-harm repeat offenders. I do just want to take up the question of why the specified schedule 1 offences have been selected, because I saw there was a lot of debate about, ‘Why this? Why not that?’ Available data indicates that people on bail are more likely to be charged with one of the specified offences than other schedule 1 offences, so there is a very specific and purposeful rationale for the offences that have been selected. I think that it is unhelpful, to say the least, to be completely disparaging of the legislation when you can see that there is a purposeful rationale for the offences that have been specified.

We did promise to deliver two packages of legislative reform this year to get our bail laws right. The first package passed in March and is already working. Remand numbers are up, so I think that should be taken seriously by this chamber. As at 6 August 2025 there was an increase of over 26 per cent of remanded youth and over 27 per cent of remanded adults since the same time last year, so to suggest that, ‘Oh, the reforms are doing nothing,’ et cetera could not be further from the truth.

We introduced the second package of reforms, bringing in the toughest bail test in the country for repeat, high-harm offenders and a second-strike rule for those who commit indictable offences on bail. And we will not apologise for being very purposeful in the particular offences and the manner in which we are seeking to manage really difficult circumstances in society – fundamentally, when we are

talking about the serious criminal acts that we have been speaking to. Having a targeted and specific approach based on data and evidence surely should have credence in this chamber.

These reforms are strong, they are necessary and they are working. So I do not know – from the rhetoric of those opposite I am hearing, ‘One size fits all; blink twice and you’re in jail.’ That is kind of the rhetoric I am hearing from those opposite. And when we are thinking about the nuances, there was a slight query there about factoring in pregnancy, although they are not going to object to it, but having absolute clarity about such matters surely is really important when we are looking at actually preventing further crime and intergenerational crime into the future. I think making light of or trying to in any way vitiate from the importance of clarity on those matters also does not do well for those opposite.

In a just society, we do not want to punish people for being poor, but at the same time we hold people accountable for doing harm. It is a very delicate and nuanced balance, and to suggest the opposite is really, you know, sticking a middle finger up at the legal system. I do not think that is helpful, because sweeping slogans are not the way to resolve the serious matters that are before us.

With the new test for repeat or serious schedule 1 offences, including aggravated home invasion, aggravated carjacking, armed robbery and aggravated burglary, we are introducing a new high degree of probability test. That means a bail decision maker must now be satisfied that there is a high degree of probability that the accused will not commit another serious offence while on bail.

This is one of the strictest bail tests in the country, and it sends a clear message: if you continue to pose a serious risk to the safety of Victorians, you will not be granted bail.

Second-strike rule – if you are already on bail for an indictable offence and you are charged with committing another indictable offence, you will now face a higher threshold, the show compelling reason test, in addition to the usual unacceptable risk test. This change is about accountability, not for minor offences but for those who repeatedly disregard the law while already on bail.

There are legislative safeguards as well, as there need to be. The safeguards are built to ensure that low-level, non-violent offences like minor shoplifting, low-value theft, low-value property damage or low-level drug possession do not trigger this uplift, and I go back to what I said from the outset, that as we are talking about the behaviour of human beings, it should be a very nuanced discussion and not a wham-bang, one-size-fits-all ‘you’re in jail because you looked the wrong way’. I know that there might be some conjecture and you might say I am being a little bit blanket in terms of my criticism, but after what we have heard for the past half hour, which was incredibly disparaging in light of the fervent work and research that has been done to come about to these very important reforms, I am going to take a little liberty in that regard.

Also, as has been stated, and I am going to reiterate this because it is very important, pregnancy and caring responsibilities must now be explicitly considered by bail decision makers, and that means the system will better recognise the impact of incarceration on mothers, children and family stability, because we know that obviously, on the one hand, it is absolutely paramount when it comes to the safety of the community and also defending victims, because we know that a crime of any kind is one crime too many and can impact the life of a person for the rest of their lives. It can have a detrimental impact, and no-one is resiling from that in any way, shape or form. We are also banning private electronic monitoring of people on bail, because no-one should be able to buy their access to bail.

On the one hand, you can have slogans; on the other hand, let us look at the action that has been taken. We have introduced the nation’s first ever machete ban, taking dangerous weapons off the streets. We launched a trial of state-run electronic monitoring for youth offenders, giving courts and police the tools to ensure bail conditions are met and to prevent repeat offending. We are giving Victoria Police the powers they need to deal with radical, extreme and violent actors who hijack peaceful protest and put public safety at risk. We have passed landmark anti-vilification and social cohesion laws – opposed

by those opposite – protecting Victorians from hate speech, division and harm. They opposed them, so they have got to live with that. They are accountable for that.

Later this year we will introduce further legislation to better protect victims-survivors of family violence, knowing what a dreadful scourge that is and also, when you are looking at intergenerational harm, the ramifications that family violence can have in terms of how it can disrupt what otherwise should be a nurtured pathway from childhood to adulthood. That is not to mention the holistic approach in terms of free TAFE and other measures to deal with cost-of-living measures. So we look at the whole picture, factoring in all the factors that can contribute to crime.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (11:59): I rise to talk on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 legislation report. Unfortunately our current bail laws and bail system cost lives. Why do I know this? Because I have walked in the shoes and immersed myself in a family from down in the Latrobe Valley. Their beloved son, unfortunately bail laws let him down, and it is all too commonplace. It is the story of a doctor that was going about his daily life and had that cut short because our current bail laws and judicial system let him down – and let him down to the worst possible degree, because it cost him his life.

Now, I have sat and spoken with his parents and his family, who obviously are devastated. They live day in and day out with thoughts of their son, whether they are waking up in the morning or sitting at the breakfast table. They will carry on – if you go and have a coffee and a conversation with them, they will interact like we do and talk about the current day proceedings – but there is a hole in their heart and just a black mist that fills their heads, as they think, ‘Why my son?’ Why did our bail laws and our judicial system let their son down? And why did it also let his wider family down?

We need change; we all know that. Everybody in this chamber knows that we need change, and that is why we are here. We do need to strengthen our bail laws. We do not, in my opinion, have the toughest bail laws in the country here in Victoria. We have loopholes. The people that do criminal activity and apply for bail do not care where the loophole is. They will find it, to the detriment of people that walk the streets of my community in the Latrobe Valley, walk the streets of the CBD or walk the streets of every single sitting member in this chamber. I am sure they have people walk through their office or pull them up in the street and say, ‘I feel unsafe, because I know people are being charged with certain offences and they go through the revolving door of our court system and are back out on the street.’ Our police do an amazing job, but they also know they are going to arrest somebody, and by the time they leave court and walk back to their car, these particular individuals will be back out on the streets and more than likely going back to finish what they started.

I have got elderly people coming to me and saying they no longer feel safe getting on public transport to get a bus to the local shopping centre to go about their daily activities. They are scared, because they see the stories on the news, they listen to the stories on the radio. But more importantly, which is more worrying, is they walk along the streets every day to go about their daily activities and they see it with their own eyes. They see people doing the wrong thing on the streets. When you are a shop owner, whether it be in a shopping strip or in a shopping mall, having people come into your actual place where you put your hard-earned money and your time and effort into opening up a small business – and having them run riot with no consequences is what we are talking about here.

People are going to do the wrong thing, that is a given. People that want to do it will do it, but there are no ramifications for them. The police will go and make these arrests. They will be taken to court and they will get out because our bail laws do not cut the mustard. That is why the member for Malvern said with the coalition – and we get some kickback from the government – if you break bail, you will face jail. That is what people on the street want: they want protection. And where do they get that protection from? They get it from us here in this chamber making concerted efforts, making the right calls, not cowering to the minority of people that are doing the wrong thing. We need to stand up for the silent majority of people that go around living their life – a mum and dad worried, when their kids

are going out to work or driving their car. Who is coming the other way? Has someone stolen a car and is driving a missile at their daughter or their son that are on the roads?

This is what we are left with at the moment. We can stand here and go over the incidentals of what this bill proposes, but it needs to be tougher. I think everybody in here knows we need tougher bail laws. The police are asking for tougher bail laws, and they are asking for more powers.

I am passionate about this because of the Gordon family, because I see how it affects them. They lost a son, a son who was giving back to society as a much loved and respected doctor, whose life was taken, tragically, because someone broke into his house and stole stuff from him – all he was doing was trying to get it back, and his life was taken. That is not right. For a year they have been trying to get over the loss of their son, and this is going to continue at family weddings, at birthdays and at Christmas – continually coming up

I need to stand here and hold the government to account for the people in my community and for the Gordon family. That is my role. That is what they have asked me to do – stand up here at every opportunity I get and not let them just be a statistic on a bit of paper that says, ‘My son was killed on the street.’ That is no good for anybody. We need to make a real difference right across the community. It is not just about the Gordon family, it is about every single Victorian. They need to know that the politicians that stand in this chamber have their back, that we have got them 100 per cent and that all the time we are going to be making decisions in this chamber that allow them to go about their daily lives safely.

We have had a reasoned amendment moved by the member for Malvern, and I am fully supportive of that, because we need tougher, harder bail laws. We need tougher policing on our streets. We need the police to have the power to be able to go and police properly – police how they want to police. Yes, we need to have guidance over that, but there are certain laws that have been wound back in this particular chamber that have actually made the lives of Victorians more unsafe, more vulnerable. Why should a person not want to go down the street to do their shopping or go to the post office to get a letter that has been sent to them? Why are we stopping that? Why aren’t we being more proactive here and doing the right thing for the Victorian people? That is my job. I have been voted in to stand here and, if I need to, hold the government to account. Yes, we are making changes with these amendments to bail, but they do not go far enough. For goodness sake, we need to make sure that all Victorians – and in particular in my case the Gordon family – know that I am fighting tooth and nail for them, because they do not want another family to go through what they go through every single day. Whether they are awake or asleep, they carry this hurt and they carry this heavy heart, because we let them down because our bail laws are too weak. We need to make sure that we get it right to protect every single Victorian.

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (12:09): It is a great pleasure to rise and speak in support of the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025. From the outset, I thank the Attorney-General as well as her staff – and I know other ministers and their offices have also been involved in putting this second tranche of bail amendments and legislation to this place – and of course everyone in the department and all the stakeholders who have been part of the consultation on this very important bill. I would also like to say a huge thankyou to all of our frontline emergency service workers, in particular Victoria Police, who are charged with keeping our streets safe and keeping our community safe and of course who are charged with prosecuting this legislation in Magistrates’ Courts across Victoria. And I thank the community for making their voices heard. Safety is the right of everybody, and community safety is a critically important thing. I am very proud that this government has it as a top priority. As someone who used to serve in Victoria Police, I know this government is absolutely committed to backing in our police officers and making sure people can feel safe in their communities and can go about their business.

The member for Malvern talked about issues that he may have around the tough bail bill title, but then started talking about ‘break bail, face jail’. It does not quite make sense if your issue is that, but then

you have this slogan you are rolling out. Let us be honest, the slogan is kind of used to make some people who might hear it think that they are just going to lock everybody up. It is not very clear. But then when you when you go into the points that the member for Malvern made, he said there is no consequence if you breach bail. That is simply not correct. If you breach bail, it is an offence. The member for Malvern also said, and apparently it is part of their plan, that there is some sort of loophole for under-18s. Under-18s were never charged with breaching a bail condition, even under the previous Bail Act 1977. They were not even covered by that section. So this loophole –

Michael O'Brien: That is not true. It was weakened in 2016.

Jackson TAYLOR: Go look at the Bail Act, member for Malvern. Go look at the Bail Act in 2021.

Michael O'Brien: I know it better than you.

Jackson TAYLOR: I do not think you do, because in your plan you say:

Reinstate the offence of committing an indictable offence while on bail ...

That is what this bill is doing. This bill is bringing in the uplift with necessary safeguards. And then there is another point:

Reinstate the offence of breaching bail conditions as a Schedule 2 offence ...

So let me get this right. I appreciate the member for Malvern has a view. Let us break down what the member for Malvern is saying. He is basically saying, 'Well, we can't trust police to do their job –

Michael O'Brien interjected.

Jackson TAYLOR: No, no, no. 'We can't trust police to do their job and actually look at the circumstances and judge if someone who has breached a bail condition is an unacceptable risk.' Right? What you are saying is if someone reports 5 minutes late, whether there is a reasonable excuse or otherwise, it is going to be up to the investigating officer, and that may not be assessed at the time because innocence or guilt is not looked at when you are looking to put someone in remand. You are not judging whether or not they are innocent or guilty of that offence. That offence may be dealt with at a later time during that remand hearing. So you are essentially saying that for someone who might turn up 5 minutes late, the default should be, in the compelling reasons test, the same as for manslaughter. There absolutely are circumstances when police can revoke bail. They can still revoke bail. They can still take someone to court and show they are an unacceptable risk at any point in time. They have that power, and they can use that as needed.

Again, if someone was to breach bail – this is very vague in their policy. It makes it sound like if they were to breach bail and they breached bail by committing any of the offences listed in schedules 1 and 2, or if they were subject to the high degree of probability test, the test the member for Malvern speaks about, it almost sounds like that would not count. It was very vague on purpose. No, you are held accountable for your offending if you breach your bail. If you breach your bail, you are held to account. It is an offence. If that breach is of a certain nature or circumstance, a police officer can say, 'Unacceptable risk.' Member for Malvern, what do you think the hit rate was for someone failing to report –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Edbrooke): Through the Chair, please.

Jackson TAYLOR: What does the member for Malvern think the hit rate was for remand of someone failing to report maybe 5 minutes late or for minor breaches? Police can be trusted to do their job.

Up until 2024, there were penalty infringement notices handed out. I handed them out. They were \$148 when I was in the job. If someone of an unacceptable nature, of an unacceptable risk was breaching their bail, I would get that offender, they would go to court and I would ask for them to be remanded. I would put forward a case on criminal record, on nature and circumstances and on

background, as every single man and woman of Victoria Police does today. We should trust them to do their job.

The member for Malvern spoke about the machete ban as well. We have our nation-leading machete ban, and there was this right-wing meme popping around – ‘\$325,000 per bin’ – and there have been members of the opposition sharing this meme. I saw that one with the girlfriend and the boyfriend, that meme, and that is why people in my community who are not even interested in politics are like, ‘These people in opposition!’ I actually do not mind the member for Malvern; he is actually a reasonable fellow. But people just look at the opposition, and they are like, ‘What is going on?’

The \$13 million investment is to support the rollout of the entire amnesty program, including public awareness, retailer education, managing exemptions for the ban and manufacturing and installation of the safe disposal bins as well as the secure collection and destruction of the items that are handed in. The fact that we have the alternative government rolling out these four-point plans at the same time as saying they have got an issue with the title of a bill – and they have got their own slogan that is vague and makes people think something that probably is not true and is not true in the detail of it, is very light on detail, and then they run out memes about the machetes. I just do not get it. I tell you what, member for Malvern, this government’s record on supporting police –

James Newbury interjected.

Jackson TAYLOR: Do not even pretend, member for Brighton, that you even understand this bail legislation. Do not even pretend you understand. The member for Malvern has got a reasonable grip on it. I will give you that, member for Malvern.

But I am very proud of this government’s record when it comes to supporting police. We have recruited over 3000 new police officers. It was the biggest recruitment in the history of Victoria Police. We have the biggest police force per capita in this country, and that is something we are very proud of. We now have permanent positions, family violence detectives, for what is genuinely the biggest scourge when it comes to crime in this state and in this country: family violence. We have done a lot, and we need to do more. I am sure the opposition are on a unity ticket on this. We know we need to do more when it comes to combating family violence – it is an absolute scourge on the nation and our communities – and I am very proud of the work the government has done.

There are body-worn cameras. We have new police stations. We have rolled out tasers right across the state. We have new iPads, we have new mobile phones and we have new tech. We have family violence reforms and mental health reforms, and those royal commissions have made a real and serious impact on the front lines, supporting the police and supporting all the different stakeholders, people and communities that our police officers come into contact with each and every single day. I am proud of the investment. I am proud that this government said with those royal commissions that we would implement every single recommendation. With the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System we said we would implement every single one before the recommendations even came out, because we knew it was the right thing to do.

Sometimes politics just does not matter. What matters is doing what is right. It is making sure we have strong laws but we listen to the voices of Victorians and have a government that backs in Victoria Police with record investment and with laws that strike the right balance and that are tough. As someone who prosecuted the Bail Act 1977 at the Melbourne Magistrates’ Court and someone who actually knows people who still work in the Melbourne Magistrates’ Court, these laws are going to make a difference.

We saw what the high degree of probability test did in New South Wales. Our version of the test is broader and it is stronger, and it includes more cohorts. It is not limited to youth, it is broader and it includes more offences. This is strong legislation. Others opposite will tell you it is weakening, but I do not understand how anyone who is reading this legislation – our current legislation and previous iterations – can look at the high degree of probability test and all the offences that have been uplifted

from schedule 2 to schedule 1 and offences that were not even in schedule 2 and are now introduced to schedule 2, where the reverse onus is on the defence to prove that they have compelling reasons or they have shown exceptional circumstances. And mate, if you have committed one of these specified high degree of probability offences and you commit it again, you now have to show that you have a high degree of probability of not reoffending.

These are tough bail laws. We are not just about four-point slogans, we are about making Victorians safe and backing in Victoria Police. I commend the bill to the house.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (12:19): I have not even said a word, and they are already up and about on the other side. It is very, very interesting. I rise to speak on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 and support the position put forward by the Shadow Attorney-General and member for Malvern. Anybody sitting in this place, anybody who just may happen to be watching at home and anybody who is living in this state of Victoria knows right now that what this government has done with law and order in this state has failed. We know that the last time the Liberals and Nationals were in government we strengthened bail laws. We introduced offences for breaching bail conditions. We introduced a reverse onus test for offending whilst on bail. Since 2016 Labor has weakened and weakened and weakened these laws. I say to the Victorian people: can you really trust the government who made the problem, who created the issues we have now, to be the ones to fix it?

They had one crack at it earlier in this term to try to fix these things. They tried to introduce the ‘tough bail laws’ bill – you know, they could not even get the name of the bill through with how tough the laws were. They are having another crack at it, a further amendment to this. They are delaying the timeline upon implementation of this bill. I can tell you right now that there are offences being committed in my electorate and I am sure in the member for Malvern’s electorate – we heard a passionate piece from the member for Bayswater; I am sure there are crimes being committed in his electorate – that will continue to be committed between now and March 2026, whether or not this strengthens these bail laws in any way. There will be no implementation of these laws until that time. How many more Victorians are going to become victims of crime before this government takes immediate action?

They talk about their leading machete ban and the bins they have placed around, expecting criminals who run around terrorising people in their homes and carjacking to all of a sudden have a conscience, wake up tomorrow morning, get that machete, wander down to the bin and place it in there and think, ‘Jeez, I’m a great citizen now.’ The fact that when they are going into people’s homes at night and holding people to ransom with machetes and all of a sudden will go and just put them in a bin – that is going to be an acceptable way to move forward.

Michaela Settle: It was okay for gun control.

Sam GROTH: It was called a buyback system. Are you buying the machetes back? I also support the member for Malvern’s reasoned amendment:

That all the words after ‘That’ be omitted and replaced with the words ‘this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the Allan Labor government:

- (a) urgently provides Victoria Police and Corrections Victoria with all resources necessary to implement this bill without further delay ...

Well, that would make sense. But also that it:

- (b) adopts the Liberal and National parties’ ‘break bail, face jail’ policy to ensure that Victoria’s bail laws do not continue to fail to protect community safety.’

I would think that in this place our responsibility is always first and foremost to those law-abiding citizens of our communities, not necessarily to those repeat offenders who continue to go through Victoria’s revolving door on bail, because as I have heard the member from Malvern say many times, bail is a privilege. Bail is a privilege that is granted to people. It should not be a revolving door where

these people continue to offend and continue to be let out. The government spruik that there are six offences that will have bail conditions removed, but what about the dozens that they have missed out? What was the one you said, member for Malvern – \$10 million proceeds of crime? That does not count.

Michael O'Brien interjected.

Sam GROTH: It is ridiculous, some of the offences that are being left off when it comes to bail uplift tests. It also exempts those who are under 18, and we know in the state of Victoria we have a youth crime crisis. We also know it is not just about locking up youth offenders, it is about implementing the programs they need to make sure they have a better opportunity in life. But just letting them out to reoffend and reoffend – and we have all seen the news reports of offenders who have been let out 10, 20, 50 times on bail – I do not think any member of the community finds that acceptable. I do not think any member of the community would be coming to people in this chamber on all sides and saying that what is currently out there in the public is working, and that should be the measure which we work on. We should be asking the community what is protecting them.

I have, as I am sure many other people do, people coming to me every single day in my office. A car was rammed through the Blairgowrie pharmacy, and now the guy is too scared to open his doors because he is wondering when they are coming back. The IGA at Blairgowrie was held up. The pub at Dromana has been broken into, with money stolen; he had his car stolen from out the back.

The bottle shop has had its windows smashed in so people can take more money, and there is no consequence for those offences. I have a constituent Travis Robertson – he is happy to be named – who was at Rosebud plaza recently with his fiancé, who now refuses to leave the house. They had a 17-year-old come into the shopping centre with an imitation gun and hold her at ransom. How was she to know it was an imitation gun? I do acknowledge the work of Victoria Police and everything they do, but we do know they are severely under-resourced. The Rosebud plaza, I kid you not, is 400 metres from Rosebud police station. It is 400 metres down the road. Those police officers were called to another situation, and so you had a youth running around pretending they had a gun in Rosebud plaza and a police car unavailable to attend. That is not about Victoria Police not doing the job, that is about Victoria Police being under-resourced to be able to do their job properly, because if they had had a car, they could have been there in 40 seconds, they said – 40 seconds. I have Rye police station closed. I have Sorrento police station closed. And when you have got someone running around with a gun – honestly, thank God it was not real. But what happens when it is? What happens when it is a real weapon and the police cannot turn up on time? Then what happens? We are having a far different conversation.

For too long, offenders have had no consequence. And we all know what happens: if there is no consequence for action, the actions continue. And under this government, for far too long there has been no consequence for action. That is why we encourage the government – the government does not have a monopoly on good ideas. I know they like to think they do, but sometimes other people have a good thought, a policy, that has been worked on. I know they like to call it 'stunts'. They like to call it 'political game'. But the reality is I would like to think there are members in this chamber who actually do have good ideas that can be discussed and that there is the opportunity to sometimes allow a piece of legislation to come in, whether or not you agree with it, in two weeks time, so it actually has the chance to be debated and you can read it. But at the moment we cannot even have the opportunity to introduce legislation that you will read. You do not even know what our ideas are. We get a 5-minute procedural debate to put things on the table. So I encourage the government, as the member for Malvern has done with his reasoned amendment, to look at the 'break bail, face jail' policy put forward by the opposition, by the Liberals and Nationals, to reinstate key bail offences and reverse-onus provisions that have been repealed by the Labor government, to remove exemptions for bail breach offences for youth offenders and to list robbery and burglary and other things that have been currently missed in this piece of legislation.

They have not adopted a single piece of the suggestions that we have put forward that we believe would make Victoria safer as soon as they were introduced. This government needs to properly resource Victoria Police. We see it every day in every community, and we see it in the legislation that the member for Caulfield tried to bring forward this morning related to the protests. But every time one of the 500 protests has happened – and yes, we want protests, we support that right, but it needs to be done correctly. But every time they happen – and we now know it is 22,000 shifts for police that are brought into the city – that means they are not in the member for Malvern's community, the member for Brighton's community or the member for Mordialloc's community. They are being brought into the city to deal with these things, and when there are 1100 vacancies at the moment, it leaves those communities already short of police resourcing even further exposed. When things happen, like what happened in my community a few weeks ago at Rosebud plaza, the likelihood of those incidents occurring and someone being severely injured or worse continues to go up.

I encourage the government: do more on this. Take action now. Do not wait till March next year. Do not implement it in an election year because it looks sexy when there is an election coming in six months time. Take action now. Look at some of the options that are being put forward by this side of the house, because this should not be about the government versus the opposition. This should be about the people outside of this building who want to see Victoria better, who want to feel safe on the streets and who want to feel like they can go to the supermarket and enjoy their time.

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (12:29): I rise today to speak on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025. This bill is all about keeping families and our whole community safe and building on the reforms that we have already made to our criminal justice system. I just note the member for Nepean's contribution before me. Those opposite like to talk a very big game on crime, on bail, but it is actually our side of the chamber that is doing the most and has done the most in the past. I have had feedback from police officers and others in Ripon that they have been more resourced in their police stations than ever before. You like to talk a big game, but it is actually we who are delivering on it.

Earlier this year, we strengthened bail tests for serious crimes and we reintroduced bail offences. This bill goes that step further to jolt the system and to send a message that bail must be respected. This bill introduces a new high degree of probability bail test for those accused of repeat serious offences committed while on bail, including home invasions, carjackings, armed robbery and burglaries. It uplifts the bail test for people accused of committing an indictable offence while already on bail for an indictable offence and specifically lists pregnancy and caring responsibilities as surrounding circumstances to be considered in bail decisions. The bill also amends the existing statutory review provision in the Bail Act 1977 to require that review to examine the impact of bail reform on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and it bans private electronic monitoring of people on bail, because no-one should be able to buy their access to bail. Importantly, the bill also includes further amendments to improve the operation of bail laws, including ensuring individuals released on bail pending family violence intervention order proceedings can be charged with contravening their bail conditions and providing for reforms in the bill to be captured in the scheduled statutory review of the Bail Act.

Our community has been calling for these changes; they deserve to feel safe on our streets and in their homes. They look to our government to listen and act accordingly, and we have done just that. We have introduced the toughest bail laws in the country, putting community safety first to protect families from serious repeat offenders who endanger other Victorians. We have also banned the sale of machetes, with a ban on possession of them kicking in from 1 September, and we have expanded random knife search powers for Victoria Police so they can seize thousands of weapons off our streets.

Locally I have recently attended community safety meetings and visited police stations in St Arnaud, Avoca, Maryborough, Creswick and beyond to discuss crime and how we can best address it. I recently hosted the Minister for Police in Ripon, who is at the table today, where we met with Victoria Police members and residents in Creswick and St Arnaud to talk through practical ways that we can strengthen community safety across our region. To my earlier point, those police officers, when the

minister and I met them and went to their police stations, said that they have been more resourced under this government than ever before and really reiterated the point that there is a perception in the regions of crime but the data is actually looking pretty good. The data is not necessarily up across our regional towns in Ripon, but the perception, as I said, is there, with many feeling worried about safety in our towns, and those feelings are genuine. You cannot go to someone and say, ‘Well, the data isn’t what you think.’ If they feel that there is that perception of crime, then we have to take that really seriously.

Victoria Police are doing a power of work to better equip our communities with information about the police assistance line, the Hoon Hotline, Crime Stoppers and other resources. Often many people I speak to across Ripon are not aware of some of these resources, like the Hoon Hotline, which I very much encourage people to take advantage of – and that is through Crime Stoppers, the Hoon Hotline – because we know that we see a lot of hoons around, and we need to report them.

We have unfortunately seen some opportunistic crimes across Ripon in recent months, including theft from unlocked cars and homes and vandalism of property. I know, having grown up in country Victoria, we never locked our doors growing up. Many people just do not lock their doors and do not lock their cars, and there are criminals out there that take advantage of that. We need to make sure that we do what we can to prevent that crime from happening.

Police have hosted community meetings about these issues and given advice about how locals can best avoid falling victim to such crimes, as well as how best to report them. We rely heavily on the men and women of Victoria Police to keep us all safe, and they do an incredible job. I want to sincerely thank every single police officer and Victoria Police member across Ripon. They are a part of our rural communities and work tirelessly day and night to protect our mums, dads, grandparents, kids, cousins and business owners. They are a part of our communities and they know our communities. I remember going into the Smythesdale police station for a cuppa with some of their police officers, and they knew every person by name in the town when someone came in to report something. They are very much ingrained in our communities, and we thank them for all that they do.

I also want to give a particular shout-out to our prison staff across Ripon. I have got several correctional facilities and I have got I think the most correctional employees of any electorate in Victoria. Employees from Hopkins Correctional Centre in Ararat and Langi Kal Kal Prison outside Beaufort do really tough work and they protect our communities in so many ways.

This bill today will help strengthen the system to support our local police and our corrections staff across Ripon by strengthening our bail laws even more. It will mean people repeating serious crimes will not be allowed out on bail easily, and this is what our police officers want to see and also our local communities. Many have said to me their resources are up, they are doing well, but they want to see those bail changes, and that is exactly what we are doing. Many people have raised their concerns with me about repeat offenders getting off too easily, and they worry that they are getting a slap on the wrist and it is not being taken seriously, but this is changing, and the proof is already there. As of May this year there are 465 more people on remand in our prisons compared to April last year.

We have also introduced post-and-boast offences targeting people who commit crimes and boast about them online. It is all part of our government’s focus on cracking down on crime as well as breaking the cycle of reoffending and preventing crime before it begins. To do this we have delivered a massive record \$1.6 billion for our community safety package in this year’s state budget. This includes \$727 million to expand capacity in our prisons and youth justice system, making sure that we have the infrastructure to hold serious offenders accountable, and also \$176 million to break the cycle of reoffending before it begins, including \$135 million for rehabilitation and reintegration programs to give young people a real shot at turning their lives around.

Our government is adapting laws to address new challenges and make sure that our system is responsive to those community concerns. Unlike those opposite, who have a lock-up-everyone

approach, this is bail reform that truly prioritises community safety and ensures that the most serious and repeat offenders are held to account, not vulnerable individuals caught up by disadvantage.

We have included safeguards in this bill to ensure that low-level, non-violent offences like minor shoplifting, low-value theft, low-value property damage or low-level drug possession do not trigger this uplift. This side of the chamber believes in a justice system that is fair but firm, a system that protects the presumption of innocence but never forgets the rights of victims or the safety of the community. We are keeping our community safe and constantly improving our system to make sure that we get it right. This is what Victorians have called for, and I look forward to updating my community on the improvements that this bill makes this week. I commend the bill to the house.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (12:38): I rise to speak to the Bail Further Amendments Bill 2025. Victorians want to be safe; they want fewer victims, fewer break-ins and fewer families harmed by crime. They also want laws that actually work. Public safety is not about more police and more prisons, it is about more care. This bill certainly will not deliver that. It layers harsher bail hurdles on top of a system that is already in crisis while the government simultaneously winds back prevention and early intervention programs – the very things that stop offending before it starts.

Let me briefly explain what this bill does. First, it inserts a new high degree of probability threshold into an unacceptable risk test for a small group of serious offences – armed robbery, aggravated burglary, home invasion, aggravated home invasion, carjacking and aggravated carjacking – where the person is accused of that offence while already on bail for one of those offences.

In those circumstances a risk that the accused would commit a schedule 1 or 2 offence is deemed unacceptable unless the bail decision maker is satisfied that there is a high degree of probability that the person would not commit one of those serious offences if released. In plain English, for people accused of repeated offending while on bail, that hurdle to get bail becomes extraordinarily high.

Second, the bill creates a broad second-strike two-step test. If a person is accused of committing any indictable offence while on bail for an indictable offence and is also charged with the accompanying commit indictable offence while on bail offence, they must now meet the show compelling reason test to get bail, unless the later offence is carved out by new schedules 4 or 5 or is not imprisonable. This substantially expands the number of situations where a tougher first-step bail test applies.

Third, the bill makes related changes to schedules and flow charts in the Bail Act 1977 to support new tests and clarifies that descriptions in schedules do not alter the legal effect of the listed offences. Fourth, it restricts electronic monitoring conditions so that they can be imposed only in limited circumstances, and it – positively – expressly requires pregnancy and caring responsibilities to be considered as part of the surrounding circumstances when bail is decided. Finally, the bill amends the Summary Offences Act 1966 regarding the offence of contravening certain bail conduct conditions. That is the machinery.

The government says that this will target repeat high-harm offending and make us safer, but the evidence and the expert advice tells us otherwise. The Law Institute of Victoria has warned that tougher bail laws of this kind will not make the community safer in the long term and that the bill's intent to strengthen the response to repeat high-harm offending is not the solution to community safety concerns. When you drive more people into remand without addressing the causes, you often increase re-offending on release. That makes our communities less safe. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission has already cautioned in relation to the government's earlier tranche that the direction of these reforms limits rights, will incarcerate more young people and risks the overincarceration of marginalised communities for lower level offending. The commission urged investment in prevention rather than headline-grabbing punishments. That warning applies just as much to this bill.

The children's commissioners likewise expressed grave concern that harsh bill settings undermine community safety by harming vulnerable children and young people rather than supporting them out

of reoffending. We should listen. Jesuit Social Services has been crystal clear: these reforms focus on the wrong end of the system. They will not prevent crime. What is needed is more investment in preventing offending in the first place. There is a notable thread of common concerns and common feedback from all of these organisations.

The Federation of Community Legal Centres says that returning to failed punitive approaches ignores the evidence and will harm, not help. Instead they are calling for Poccum's law, a fair bill model that saves lives and reduces harm. For First Nations communities, the stakes could not be higher. The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service has campaigned with more than 100 organisations for just and fair bail laws, warning that these tough settings will inevitably result in more Aboriginal deaths in custody. We should not pass laws that our First Nations legal services tell us will make things worse.

Even the government's own narrative admits that these laws will increase remand. They modelled for it. A surge in remand, though, is not a marker of success; it is a signal that the front end of the system is failing and that we are paying far more to achieve far less. We cannot divorce this bill from the broader picture. At this very moment the government says that community safety is paramount, but funding for crime prevention and for youth diversion has been shrinking, with programs facing the axe for want of support. The Greens have asked questions in budget estimates hearings for the last two years. Why has crime prevention funding disappeared? The result has been and will continue to be predictable – less outreach, fewer mentors, fewer targeted interventions, more police, more prisons. That is an expensive way to fail.

There is another path – the path that the Greens have proposed, the path that all these organisations are proposing – grounded in evidence, prevention and care. First, reinvestment: redirect the enormous costs of expanded remand and prison infrastructure into what we know works – intensive case management, youth work, family therapy, alcohol and other drug services, mental health support, safe housing, education re-engagement and employment pathways. This is what being smart on crime looks like, and it reduces victimisation over time. That is what our legal, human rights and community sectors are asking us to do. Police alone cannot solve this. We need credible messenger programs, positive mentoring, digital literacy and counter-narrative work, as well as restorative justice that builds accountability and builds community ties. These approaches are being piloted here and proven overseas. They are cheaper than prison and far more effective at changing behaviour and keeping our communities safe.

Third, fix bail fairly. Keep the recent evidence-based improvements that narrowed net-widening and recognised the tragedy of Veronica Nelson's death. Do not re-expand bail hurdles where there is no link to crime prevention. Where risk is real and specific, courts already have the tools to refuse bail. But blanket settings like this that presume the worst will always scoop up the wrong people, especially kids, women, First Nations people and poor people, and they create more harm than they prevent.

Finally, listen to the experts. When the Law Institute of Victoria, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the equal opportunity commission, children's commissioners, community legal centres, First Nations organisations and social services are all waving red flags, the responsible course of action is to step back, consult and invest in what works, not double-down on the futile politics of appearing tough.

This bill moves us further away from a system that is effective, humane and just. It will inflate demand, entrench disadvantage and divert resources away from prevention. It will do little to stop the small number of people driving serious harm, but it will catch many, many more in the net who could have been safely supported to change course. This is not safety, this is a false promise. The Greens will vote against the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025, and we call on the government to drop this second tranche, to stop defunding intervention and to bring back a reinvestment strategy that funds prevention and diversion. That is how we make Victoria safer.

John LISTER (Werribee) (12:48): I would like to start off on speaking about this bill by reiterating that community safety is our priority on this side, and we are delivering tough bail laws – some of the toughest in this country – banning machetes and backing in Victoria Police with the resources and powers they need to keep our communities, like mine in Wyndham, safe. The Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 is part of our reform agenda, and the second tranche, as we have already heard. Since that first tranche, we have seen an increase, as of 6 August, of over 26 per cent of young people remanded in custody and over 27 per cent of adults remanded in custody since that same time last year. While we have heard from the other side there are still offences that we are seeing come through those crime statistics, the crime statistics period still does not cover the period that we have had this first tranche of bail laws. So we do look forward to seeing what those crime statistics are saying about some of the challenges that we do have in our communities, including in mine in the electorate of Werribee.

This further amendment bill introduces the high degree of probability test that we spoke about when we first brought these bail laws to Parliament, and that is about looking at people who are accused of committing specific high-harm, high-risk offences while on bail and introducing an additional offence for that. It also uplifts those charged with an indictable offence while on bail for another indictable offence to restrict a bail test. When it comes to justice, it is important that these reforms are not about being soft or hard. It is about standing firm on the side of everyday Victorians who want to go about their lives with peace of mind.

During my community barbecues, constituent cafes and when interacting with folks at their doors or out in town, community safety is front of mind for many in my electorate.

This bill, along with the raft of other measures we have introduced to this Parliament since I have been here from February or March, shows that it is front of mind for this government too. This test that we are introducing, the new high degree of probability test, will make it harder for alleged serious repeat offenders to get bail. It will work alongside the existing bail tests that apply to those charged with serious offences, namely the exceptional circumstances test and the unacceptable risk test. The schedule 1 offences to which the new probability test will apply are aggravated home invasion, carjacking and aggravated carjacking, armed robbery, aggravated burglary and home invasion. Armed robbery, aggravated burglaries, or agg burgs, home invasion and carjacking will become those schedule 1 offences when the amendments in our Bail Amendment Act commence at the end of this month. In Victoria it is paramount that we get this right. Bail conditions – and I said this in my contribution on the first tranche – are not about set and forget, they are about reviewing and seeing how it changes with community expectations and the nature of offending in our communities.

Also I want to just talk briefly to the member for Malvern's reasoned amendment wanting to see additional resources to Corrections Victoria and Victoria Police. In this state budget we have seen a massive \$727 million uplift to ramp up capacity in our state's prisons and youth justice centres, including the one just down the road from me at Cherry Creek, to deal with this increasing number of alleged offenders. As I said at the start, we have seen that 26 per cent increase in just young offenders alone going on bail. In my electorate we also provided operational funding for the new Wyndham law courts to take the capacity of our magistrates services in Wyndham from around two, maybe three, courts, depending on the week, to 12, including specialist family violence courts and a Koori court. Also people can get their day in court earlier, which I think is an important part of this debate. We need to remember that one of the reasons why we need to have these tough bail laws is also because we need to address the issue of the timeframe between someone being charged for the first time with a serious offence or other offence and having their day in court. I know in Wyndham that has been particularly challenging, and our investment in our new law courts means that more people will get their day in court sooner.

I have said this before in this place, but I think it is worth repeating. Unlike those opposite, our government does not just bleat about crime and try and stir up fear in communities like mine. We listen to the community and the expertise of Victoria Police, including those at the Werribee police station.

I had the honour of visiting our local area commander and our dedicated youth crime taskforce and proactive policing unit with the minister at the table not too long ago, and recently met up again with our local area commander to talk about the impacts of these because, as I referenced earlier in a contribution in this chamber, we do listen to that advice from Victoria Police because we do not cross that line. They are the professionals when it comes to community safety. In talking to our local police when the first tranche came through, I explained that part of the approach with having this second tranche is we need to make sure that we have that uplift in resources so that we can deal with the increased demand for remand. They were quite understanding of that. In talking to the youth crime taskforce not long after, they have seen more of these repeat offenders – who they pick back up again – being remanded, not back out in our community.

I spoke in my first contribution about the list that the youth crime taskforce produced, with the dates that they have been picking up their particular targeted repeat offenders. I also just want to point out that this youth crime taskforce was established and funded by this government as part of an uplift to policing services across the Wyndham police service area. There are 144 new police in the West Gate division, and quite a considerable number of them went to this youth crime taskforce. I thank them for their work, because I see them at Tuckers in the morning in the coffee shop. I see them out in the community. I see them working with our local school principals as well to do that proactive policing work in schools, to not only look at those people who might be on bail for offences but also at the families around them and the young people who may be influenced by them, making sure that they do not go down that same path as well. I thank the youth crime taskforce for the work that they do out in Wyndham.

Our attention is, rightly, on crimes such as burglary and theft. They are things that we are seeing as crime trends throughout particularly the Wyndham police service area. But it is also important that we do not lose sight of the issue of family violence, which has almost doubled in my part of the world. We have got a lot of services out in Wyndham, but it is still one of the biggest drivers of violent crime against a person. I thank the minister and all the agencies that are involved in this space for the important work they do, particularly in Wyndham.

I also want to reflect on the fact that the idea around having this increased test makes it very clear to magistrates, makes it very clear to justices, that this is what our community expects. We cannot dictate in individual cases, ‘This person shouldn’t be on bail; this person should be remanded.’ It would be highly inappropriate if we went down that path, just like it is highly inappropriate to presume to know better than Victoria Police in these matters and to presume to know better than the Chief Commissioner of Police when it comes to other matters. I think it is particularly important that when we do talk about this and about this uplift, we set the clear expectation for the judicial community that this is what communities like mine in Wyndham expect. We expect people who are on remand and are charged with serious offences to face a higher test as to whether or not they get bail.

I also want to point out that work in this space is not just about the laws at the start – so the laws for our police and the resources for our police – or the laws towards the end or the resources for corrections or our courts. It is also about the range of other things that we need to do in our community, particularly mine, to help vulnerable young people stay away from a life of crime. Working as a year level leader, I have worked with young people who have had contact with the justice system, and the most effective thing that we have been able to do is work with our embedded youth outreach project.

Anthony Carbines interjected.

John LISTER: Yes, it is a good project. Thank you for funding it, minister at the table. It is a fantastic project to divert young people away from crime. We have to keep our focus also on making sure that we have good community services in communities like mine to be able to divert people away from crime.

[NAME AWAITING VERIFICATION]

To conclude I want to end on the thoughts of Jackson Ferreira, who is a student from Hester Hornbrook Academy, which is one of those schools that is helping students to re-engage with their education, and who recently completed work experience in my Werribee office. Jackson reflected that the bail reforms would help keep the community safe from repeating offenders:

[QUOTE AWAITING VERIFICATION]

Growing communities like where I live will benefit from these laws and changes, because I know that as a student leader at my school, I don't want the students I represent being involved or being influenced by those who are repeat offenders. I don't want my peers to get in that trouble that ruins their lives. These reforms wouldn't just help protect myself or my school or my fellow students but protect the entire community where we live in.

Thanks, Jackson. With that, I commend the bill to the house.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:58): I rise to speak on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 and support the amendment moved by the member for Malvern. Those amendments talk very much about ensuring that the government provides urgent resources to Victoria Police and Corrections Victoria – all the resources necessary to implement the bill without further delay – and secondly, adopts the Liberal–National parties' 'break bail, face jail' policy to ensure that Victoria's bail laws do not continue to fail to protect community safety.

What this government has done in law and order has been an absolute failure. And I have got to say it was a bit rich for the member for Werribee to get up here and talk about just how important law and order is and the difficulty with crime when only in March, going into his campaign, when he was asked, law and order was not even a top-five priority. It was not even a key element that he was focused on. He could not have cared less about law and order, and now, magically, the member for Werribee has come in here and realised that he had absolutely no idea about what was happening in Werribee. He has finally woken up to the problems that we are facing in our state and has got on board. Well, welcome aboard, member for Werribee, because I can tell you your constituents have been saying for a long time that there is a crime crisis and they want the government to act. Your government, member for Werribee, has failed. Your government has failed.

John Lister: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I believe earlier today there was discussion from the Chair about the use of the terms 'you' and 'your' as reflections on the Chair. I know I have been here only 5 minutes, but I would counsel the member not to do that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Edbrooke): As Chair I will say that that is reflecting on the Chair – the use of the term 'you'.

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

Business interrupted under standing orders.

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge in the gallery the Treasurer of the Northern Territory the Honourable Bill Yan MP.

Members

Minister for Ports and Freight

Absence

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I wish to advise the house that for the purposes of question time today the Minister for Health will answer questions for the health infrastructure portfolio and the Minister for Transport Infrastructure will answer questions for the portfolios of roads and road safety, and ports and freight.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Early childhood education and care

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): My question is to the Premier. In 2020 a childcare centre dismissed a male educator who had kissed and groomed toddlers, yet he continued to work in childcare for four years until he was blacklisted in 2024. Despite this, he continued holding a working with children check until this morning. Why did it take an ABC report for this government to ensure this individual is not working with children in Victoria?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:03): In answering the Leader of the Opposition's question, I want to be absolutely clear that the situation he has outlined, as was reported earlier today, is clearly unacceptable. It is absolutely unacceptable what has occurred here, and it further underscores the need, as I have said on a number of occasions, for the system to be strengthened. It clearly needs to be strengthened and further action needs to be taken. I have been advised, in regard to this individual, that immediate steps have been taken to cancel his working with children check. But this process has clearly outlined that there is the need for further action – action that we will be taking. I have been clear since Victoria Police first advised the public of their investigation into the most horrific allegations of abuse that we will be taking every step to strengthen child safety. That work is already underway through the working with children check, and the rapid review that will shortly be handed to government will outline further action that we will take.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was around why it took an ABC report to uncover something that this government has known about. This was reported back in 2020. What has the government been doing? I would ask you to ask the Premier to come back to that question.

The SPEAKER: I remind the Manager of Opposition Business that a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): Why did the government consider it appropriate for this individual to work with children in junior sports teams, Scouts, schools, foster care, kinship care and play facilities, amongst many other places, with unsupervised children, until a media report this morning?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:06): In answering the supplementary question from the Leader of the Opposition, I again restate what I said earlier: it is clearly unacceptable. It is not acceptable what has occurred in this instance, and it is absolutely why we are undertaking work to protect children in this state and the system does need to be strengthened. It is why there is action that has already been taken to strengthen the worker-screening unit and action that has already been taken by the Minister for Children around the registration of early childhood workers, and it is why we will take further action. I have been clear from day one that the rapid review, the work that is being undertaken right now, will outline further action that the government will be taking.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. This has been known for some five years. We are not asking anything about a rapid review, we are asking whether the government considers this was appropriate for the past five years.

The SPEAKER: The point of order is to do with debating? The Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: worker entitlements

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:07): Eleven days ago we announced that our government would legislate the right of Victorians to work from home, and yesterday I was pleased to stand with the Treasurer to confirm the consultation with Victorians to hear from them about what is working right now as they work from home, how it gives workers time and money back into their

day and how they can have their say as we develop legislation. And today, with the Attorney-General, we stood with Victorian tradies, plumbers and union members, who said loud and clear that working from home works for everyone. I am really pleased to update the house that in just the 24 hours after the survey was made available for the Victorian community to have their say Victorians have had their say already, with more than 6000 Victorians already – just in the first 24 hours – having their say. And of course this opportunity runs for the next seven weeks.

This is, if I can share with you, Speaker, an example of a worker who cannot work from home. Dave is a plumber. Dave is working right now on the new Footscray Hospital project. He lives in the great outer east and works on the new Footscray Hospital project. But his wife can work from home, and she works from home one day a week, which gives his family balance. It gives his family balance, it gives them time, it gives them less stress and it puts money back into their household budget. These are the workers that can benefit from working from home. Workers know that working from home works. It is good for the economy too because workers are more productive. And that is why, being on the side of workers, we are going to protect their right to work from home.

Early childhood education and care

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:09): My question is to the Minister for Government Services. An investigation by Goodstart Early Learning found that a worker kissed at least two toddlers on their cheeks, brushed his face against their necks and attempted to groom children at the centre. The man was issued an interim negative notice by the working with children check unit. Why did the government remove the notice, allowing this man to continue to work with children?

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women) (14:10): I thank the member for her question, and of course, as the Premier said, we will always act to protect children from sexual and physical harm. To my knowledge there has not been any removal of notices. In fact regulations have only just changed because of the swift action taken by the Premier on 29 July to ensure that other regulators are now reporting in to the worker-screening unit around those workers that are unfit to hold a working with children check. We will continue to improve the system, and we look forward to receiving the recommendations from the review.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:11): The childcare centre was never notified of the outcome of the man's working with children check review. Why not?

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women) (14:11): There is a screening process where employers can go online and review whether their workforce does have a working with children check or not. So there is an application process there that they can review, but up until the regulations –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Laverton, leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Laverton withdrew from chamber.

Brad Battin: On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to relevance, the minister clearly said then that the agencies can go and check online to see if the person has a working with children review. Is it the government's position that the childcare centres have to go and check it rather than you notify them of someone who is causing issues in the child care?

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Natalie HUTCHINS: Up until the regulations changed just a couple of weeks ago, in addition to criminal history, the worker-screening unit could act on findings from the commissioner for children

and young people, the suitability panel and the Victorian Institute of Teaching. This has now been expanded to include the Department of Education and equivalent regulators for early –

Jess Wilson: On a point of order, Speaker, this was a very narrow question about why the childcare centre was not notified of the outcome of the review. I ask you to bring the minister back to the question.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked. I do remind the minister that it was a very narrow question.

Natalie HUTCHINS: Those regulations have delivered a whole range of new inputs into how we are now administering the working with children check, but we realise that there is more change that needs to come. That is why there is a review underway.

Jess Wilson: Speaker, on a further point of order, the case we are talking about was in 2020, not about regulations that were made last month. I take the minister back to relevance about the question: why the childcare centre was not notified.

The SPEAKER: I ask you not to repeat the question. The minister was being relevant. The minister has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: worker entitlements

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:13): I rise to update the house on how Victorians are working in some of the most energy-efficient workplaces out there: their homes. On this side of the house we know that working from home works for families, is great for their wallets and is good for the economy. It is why the Allan Labor government is enshrining the right to work from home in law. But we are also making sure that homes and home offices are more comfortable to work in and live in and more energy-efficient. Our Solar Homes program has helped more than 400,000 Victorian homes install solar panels, energy-efficient hot-water systems and batteries, slashing their energy bills each and every day. There are millions of solar panels installed on homes across the state, generating free power every day, and with greater electrification what that will mean is you can put that free solar energy to even better use, saving you even more money on your energy bills whilst you are also working from home.

Our Victorian energy upgrades program has installed more than 41,000 energy-efficient heating and cooling upgrades this year alone, so we know that there are plenty of warm, comfortable home offices out there this winter. Even better, these upgrades are helping those households save more than \$1000 off their energy bills each and every year – a more efficient, more comfortable home, saving households money and helping those mums and dads to work even more comfortably themselves from home. But we know what some would do if they had the chance. Solar Homes rebates would go. VEU discounts for electrification would go. Absolutely bills would go up. Energy bills would go through the roof, and the rights of mums and dads to work from home would also be gone. It is absolutely clear, whichever way you look at it, that only the Allan Labor government is on the side of families working at home or outside the home.

Early childhood education and care

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:16): My question is to the Premier. Today the childcare regulator has again been exposed for failing to do its job. Despite this, the Minister for Children has said that the child regulator 'is effectively doing its job' and the terms of reference from the government's review explicitly state it 'is not intended to be a review of the performance or governance of the Victorian regulatory authority'. Given the catastrophic failings of the regulator, why has it been excluded from the government's review?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:16): In answering the Leader of the Opposition's question – indeed I was asked a very similar question yesterday – I reiterate and reinforce the answer

to the question yesterday, which includes, as I said in the answer to the earlier question, that the system clearly does need to be strengthened, which is why, in addition to the immediate actions that have been taken around having an early childhood worker registration scheme that has some thousands of people now registered on that register, the rapid review that is underway and is –

Brad Battin: On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to relevance, the question is very clear about the exclusion of the regulator from the review as outlined within the terms of reference from the government.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Speaker, on the point of order, there is no point of order. The Premier has been on her feet for around 40 seconds, and she is directly addressing the question. I ask that you rule the point of order out of order and let the Premier get on with outlining the terms of reference for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: I will give the Premier time to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I advised the house yesterday, the terms of reference do go to information sharing between regulators and agencies both within Victoria and across jurisdictions, which is something that is necessary.

Brad Battin: On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to relevance, it was a very clear question that went to the exclusion of the regulator. Should it help the Premier, it says it ‘is not intended to be a review of the performance or governance of the Victorian regulatory authority’, and I am happy to make that available to the house if the Premier has not got it. It clearly excludes the regulatory authority.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Leader of the Opposition to state his points of order succinctly. The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was about to advise the house, one of the challenges around a system that needs to be strengthened is information sharing. Indeed it goes to some of the questions that were asked in this place earlier today. It is clear that one of the issues with the early childhood and childcare system, not just across Victoria but across the nation, across the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors, is information sharing between regulators, which is why it is part of the rapid review. And as I have said previously, we will act to keep children safe when we receive that work.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is required to be factual, and the fact of the matter is that the regulator is excluded from her review. I would ask you to ask the Premier to be factual, please.

The SPEAKER: Members are expected to be factual at all times. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:20): Yesterday and today the Premier said that the system needs to be strengthened. Why is the minister telling parents that the regulator is effectively doing its job while the Premier says the system is not strong enough to keep children safe?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:20): I think the Leader of the Opposition knows the context in which the hardworking Minister for Children made that statement. It was in the context of the work that the regulator has been doing in meeting its obligations around the inspection framework that it operates within. But I reiterate that the system does need to be strengthened. We have undertaken immediate steps and will go further, because as I have said from day one, we need to do more to keep children safe. That is why in receiving the rapid review we will accept all recommendations of that review and take further action on its recommendations.

Ministers statements: period products

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women) (14:21): I rise to update the house on how this side of the chamber continues to back women with our free pads and tampons program. We have reached a huge milestone, and that is that our free, easy-to-use vending machines have issued more than 100,000 products. We expect this number to only increase, with machines being rolled out into popular venues like the State Netball and Hockey Centre, where 80 per cent of the patrons are women and girls. We also are seeing machines roll out at Ikon Park and the MCG. They will join of course machines that are already operating in the public spaces of our hospitals, libraries, community centres and many other venues that are supplying free pads and tampons to Victorians every day.

The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Berwick, will be happy to know that he has already got four machines in his electorate, and he can get out and about and celebrate this if he can find it in his vocabulary to say the word ‘period’. The member for Caulfield, the deputy leader, has four dispensers supplying his constituents with free pads and tampons.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The minister will be heard in silence.

Natalie HUTCHINS: The member for Caulfield, the deputy leader, also has four dispensers supplying his constituency, giving out free pads and tampons. Perhaps the two members could pass that on to their leader in the upper house, because we know that that particular individual struggles to listen to women. There have also been 40 free pad and tampon machines issued in his electorate.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is an absolute disgrace. This minister, who is not even doing her job of protecting children, is in the gutter.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Brighton will resume his seat. That is not a point of order.

Natalie HUTCHINS: Finally, I am sad that the member for Lowan is not here to celebrate the fact that there are five machines in the electorate of Lowan.

The SPEAKER: Make sure this is a point of order, member for Brighton.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, ministers statements are not an opportunity for ministers to behave like grubs.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Natalie HUTCHINS: It is policies like this that are standing up for women, whether it is our safety package or free pads and tampons.

Ambulance services

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:25): My question is to the Minister for Health. In August of last year, as a patient began to deteriorate at Maroondah Hospital, paramedics were unable to get medical assistance from hospital staff, forcing them to call a backup intensive care ambulance. That ambulance crew then treated the patient in the hospital corridor. The minister announced a full investigation into this incident at the time. Minister, what were the findings of that full investigation?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:25): I thank the member for his question. That investigation is still being completed by Ambulance Victoria, but what I can outline for the benefit of the member is the work that our government is doing to ensure that patients are being transferred more quickly from ambulances to hospitals in order to receive the treatment that they need. Indeed the data that was

released only last week demonstrates that the work that we are doing in terms of the rollout of the standards for timely ambulance and emergency care is making a real difference to the time it takes to transfer a patient from an ambulance to an emergency department. What is more, we are also very focused on ensuring that we have got patient flow right through the system and that we are moving people appropriately from ambulance to emergency department and then into a ward or indeed discharged home.

This is an opportunity to remind all members in the house that, as our ambulance services continue to face unprecedented demand, we have just come off the second busiest quarter on record – 98,000 code 1 call-outs. It is also an opportunity to remind Victorians that our government has invested in a range of alternative modes of care and pathways for care, including the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department. We have invested in the VVED so that it will be able to triple the number of patients that it can see every day, up to 1750. Similarly, we have continued to invest in our urgent care clinics, and we welcome the Albanese Labor government’s ongoing commitment to co-fund the urgent care clinics, which of course were pioneered in Victoria.

But I am very happy to follow up in relation to the first part of the question that the member asked and report back to him.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:27): It is a year since the minister said, ‘I want to know exactly what has gone on here.’ Can the minister advise the house when she will know exactly what went on there?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:28): I think I have already answered that question. I have indicated to the member that I am very happy to provide him with further advice outside the chamber when I have that review completed.

Ministers statements: worker entitlements

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:28): I rise to update the house on how the Allan Labor government is delivering more homes for Victorian families. But this is not just about bricks and mortar; it is about investing in the future of work, supporting Victorian families and building stronger, more connected local communities. Our *Plan for Victoria* sets out a bold and ambitious vision: 2.24 million new homes by 2051. These are not just any homes; they are homes close to public transport, shops, schools, essential services and local jobs, with 60 new train and tram zones across Melbourne, delivering 300,000 new homes in great locations. And in our growth areas we have released the longest ever pipeline of land – 180,000 new homes with backyards. To make this happen faster we are cutting red tape, with the townhouse code and the single-home code speeding up approvals for well-designed homes that meet high standards.

But this is not just about building more homes. We are also paving the way for more home offices by protecting the right for Victorians to work from home two days a week. With more homes and more home offices, we are making it easier for Victorians to find a place to call their own and supporting them to spend precious time with their loved ones and in their communities, helping Victorians save \$110 a week, giving Victorians greater control over their work–life balance – less time in traffic, more time with family and in their local neighbourhoods, supporting local business. Working from home is not just good for families, it works for everyone. It is good for our economy and for the heart of our local communities. Those opposite continue to block more homes. They refuse to support Victorian families. We say yes to more homes and yes to working from home.

Early childhood education and care

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:30): My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier explain why the working with children check of the individual dismissed for sexual misconduct from a childcare centre in 2020 is still current?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:31): As I said earlier today, both at a media conference and in answer to a question earlier in the house, the advice I have received is that steps have been taken to cancel this individual's working –

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: That is exactly what I said. I have been consistent today in stating that the advice I have received is that this individual is in the process of having his working with children check cancelled.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:32): As his working with children check is still current, can the Premier confirm that this individual can still work with children right now?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:32): In understanding the concern relating to this individual and the circumstances around his status, to ensure that the information I am relaying publicly is the most up-to-date information, I will seek advice.

Ministers statements: worker entitlements

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (14:32): The Allan Labor government's commitment to legislate the right to work from home a couple of days a week is not just good for household budgets or the demands of a modern family; it is also fantastic for those Victorians who want to enjoy the great outdoors or the extraordinary events calendar we have in Victoria. We have invested in parks and gardens and waterways right throughout Victoria. The average savings in travelling of someone working from home is 3 hours a week. That means you have got 3 hours back in your week to do a whole bunch of things.

Can I give Victorians some suggestions, through you, Speaker. Rather than being stuck in gridlock, you could go to the 30-odd upgraded off-leash dog parks with your four-legged friends and enjoy some of the amenities there, including the one in the Leader of the Opposition's electorate. Instead of being packed on a train, families can go to any one of the suburban waterways and lakes, including Karkarook Park in the member for Clarinda's electorate, Lake Wendouree in the member for Wendouree's electorate or the beautiful Ferntree Gully quarry in the member for Monbulk's electorate and go fishing – rather than being stuck on a packed train. In fact rather than being stressed about picking up the kids from child care or from school you could, straight after work from home, go to the Cranbourne botanic gardens and enjoy the beautiful asset that is there, go to the Queen Victoria Market or catch the AFLW match tomorrow night – Carlton and Collingwood – at Ikon Park. I want to wish all the AFLW players a fantastic start to the season this week.

Fundamentally, because of the investments of the Allan Labor government right across the events economy, right across parks and gardens, right across the outdoors, right across Victoria, the value of working from home and not being stuck in a train or in gridlock on a road is more meaningful in this state than in any other state in the country.

Constituency questions

Sandringham electorate

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:35): (1230) My constituency question is to the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop. Residents of Highett have been telling me that they are deeply concerned about the loss of green space at Sir William Fry Reserve on the corner of Bay Road and Nepean Highway. This is a place where locals go to enjoy our environment, young people go to use the playgrounds and skate park and local families go to kick the footy and enjoy time away from school and work. But now the Victorian Labor government want to rip our community's green space in half and chuck a multibillion-dollar train station, which frankly no-one in my community has ever wanted, smack bang in the middle of Sir William Fry Reserve. When will the minister provide more

information on what the government will do to ensure that the quality of life for our residents will not be negatively impacted?

Yan Yean electorate

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (14:36): (1231) My question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. We know we have got fantastic improvements to the V/Line service in the north, with the Donnybrook and Wallan stations previously being upgraded. We have got lots of extra services and more VLocity trains, and we are going to have a new peak service, am and pm, for my community, which is great. I know that we have co-funded a northern rail business case with the federal government for \$7 million, so I ask the minister: what improvements are being looked at for rail in my community?

Lowan electorate

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:37): (1232) My constituency question is to the Minister for Environment, and the information I seek is: when will authority to control wildlife permits be issued to landholders in the north-west of the state to assist in the management of wild dogs or dingoes mauling live sheep and lambs on private land? Over the past few weeks I have been sent horrific images of so many lambs being mauled by dingoes in the north-west. These are little nips of flesh that are taken from ribs and from the stomach, and you can see live lambs walking with entrails dragging across the ground. The landholders are absolutely in despair about how their stock are being treated by these dingoes. They have exhausted all nonlethal means to control these dingoes or wild dogs. They are now asking when they will be able to access ATCWs so that they can appropriately manage the wild dogs or dingoes, protect their stock and stop this cruel slaughter of the lambs.

Preston electorate

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (14:38): (1233) My question is for the Attorney-General, and I ask this question on behalf of Addie, a student at Reservoir Views Primary School. Our question is: can a grade 3 or a grade 4 student be fined for littering? Addie asked this question during a fantastic discussion with the grade 3s and the grade 4s about social and environmental responsibility. I would like to commend grade 3/4 teachers Connie Amoruso and Chay Baker for organising that discussion and recognise the very thoughtful and engaged way that all the students approached both state and local issues. While I am here, I also commend Hayriye Ali and Steve Stafford, the great leaders of Reservoir Views Primary School. I took this particular question on notice because, as the Attorney-General knows, we have made some recent changes to the arrangements for fines for children. We would be grateful if the Attorney could clarify whether the EPA or local councils could issue a littering fine to a child of that age and how such a fine would be enforced under the relevant acts.

Rowville electorate

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (14:39): (1234) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. When will the minister and the Department of Transport and Planning fix the ongoing embarrassing fiasco of the traffic lights at the Henderson Road and Kelletts Road intersection in Rowville continuing to be powered by a diesel generator? It is now 88 weeks since the Leader of the Nationals and I spoke to journalist Sharnelle Vella, then at Channel 7, when it was first reported in December 2023 that a diesel generator was being used to power the traffic lights at the intersection. I just cannot believe how stupid this situation is. As the member for Gippsland South, the Leader of the Nationals, and I were explaining, the situation is that they went ahead and built a set of traffic lights at an intersection but forgot to connect the power to the traffic lights. How stupid can this stupid government possibly be?

Werribee electorate

John LISTER (Werribee) (14:40): (1235) My constituency question is to the Minister for Small Business and Employment. Can the minister outline the benefits to small businesses in the Werribee

electorate, and across Victoria more broadly, that the Allan Labor government's work-from-home policy will have? We know this government is providing more support for small businesses through our payroll tax exemptions and cutting red tape throughout the sector. We have seen many people moving to my electorate, building houses in our community and choosing to start their own businesses from their offices at home or sometimes from the kitchen table. In my regular community barbecues I have met with these entrepreneurs and spoken to them about their plans and the benefit to working in our community, things like being able to be close to home, do the school pick-up and reduce traffic congestion, which is another key concern for many of us out my way. Last week I held one of my regular constituency cafes online to give people who work from home that benefit of being able to still engage with their member of Parliament, so I know there are benefits there as well. I thank the minister for her advocacy and look forward to her answer.

Melbourne electorate

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:41): (1236) My question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. Minister, when will the government address the challenges facing residents who live in apartments in the city? In the past few decades we have seen a boom in apartment towers across Melbourne, especially in my electorate, and many people love living in an apartment building and all the benefits that come with it, but our government's decisions and laws and regulations have simply not kept up. I have heard so many horror stories of people struggling with the astronomical cost to replace dangerous flammable cladding that was installed due to government failures, people facing huge hurdles to getting off gas and putting solar power on their apartments, people locked into unfair and expensive dodgy strata contracts, and the lack of planning around schools and open space has residents simply fed up. Governments over many years have let these things happen. The upcoming review of the Owners Corporation Act 2006 is a good first step, but we need genuine reform, including things like reforming the dodgy developer tax loopholes and the outdated Docklands Act 1991 and City of Melbourne Act 2001 to make sure that apartment residents have the rules that enable them to live a good life in our city, just like anyone else.

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (14:42): (1237) My constituency question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. Is there a plan to review and expand the Hindi language learning opportunities offered by the Victorian School of Languages for the people of the Glen Waverley district? Recently I met with several local Hindi community groups, and all of them highlighted the ongoing challenge of insufficient Hindi learning opportunities in Melbourne's east, particularly in my district. Currently the Victorian School of Languages offers Hindi at Glen Waverley Secondary College on Tuesdays with two streams: years 1 to 10 and years 11 and 12. The teachers are doing a fantastic job, and many students go on to become high achievers in VCE Hindi. However, community feedback is clear: demand is growing rapidly in the area. According to the latest census, my electorate has a higher than average proportion of residents who speak Hindi at home – in some suburbs more than triple the Victorian average. Hindi is also becoming increasingly popular as a VCE subject, offering cultural enrichment and academic benefits, including strong scaling that supports great ATAR results. I believe it would be beneficial to review the current Hindi language provision.

Kew electorate

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:43): (1238) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Has the minister considered meeting with residents who live near Yarra Boulevard in Kew to hear from them firsthand about the impact of dangerous driving along this road? Almost nightly these residents endure noise pollution from drivers speeding along Yarra Boulevard who remain undeterred by recent upgrades to the road that were supposed to reduce the speed of motorists. With police resources already stretched, it is simply not possible for police to maintain a presence there every night, and residents are concerned that it will be not too long before yet another fatality occurs along this road. I have also spoken with the Minister for Environment about the potential to trial EPA cameras

around noise because the hooning along Yarra Boulevard is keeping these residents up night after night, and we need to think about ways to slow down drivers along Yarra Boulevard. I ask the minister to consider meeting these residents and hope we can find some proactive solutions to support them.

Ripon electorate

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (14:44): (1239) My question is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport. Minister, how many passengers have benefited from our recent boost to weekend train services on the Ararat line? Our state Labor government has transformed the Ararat line, bringing it back from the dead after Jeff Kennett and his Liberal mates closed it in the 1990s. It has breathed new life into Beaufort and Ararat, connecting locals to the rest of the state again. Since then we have slashed the cost of a V/Line ticket and boosted train services on the Ballarat and Ararat lines. Back in April we added two new return services to the Ararat line on Saturdays and Sundays, including a 9:15 pm Saturday service to get passengers home from AFL twilight matches or an evening in Melbourne. This is what the Ararat community called for, and we got it done. Now local schools, businesses and the hospital want to see an additional morning train service to get workers into Ararat before 9 am. I have raised this with the minister and will keep working closely with locals to make it a reality in the future.

Bills

Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:45): Where I left off was referring to the issue that we have in this state about law and order and the crime crisis that we are experiencing and that the government have only just started to wake up to this huge problem. This problem did not happen only yesterday. This has been a 10-year problem because of the failure of the Allan and formerly the Andrews Labor governments. The government has had its head in the sand, and now what we are seeing is catch-up. But unfortunately it is catch-up which is all too little, all too late and also all too soft. That is why the member for Malvern, in the amendment that he has proposed to this bill, talks very much about how we can actually make our bail laws stronger.

If you look at the history in terms of bail laws, back in 2013 one of the focuses that we had when the Liberals were in power was to strengthen bail laws, particularly for those people that were reoffending and were serious threats. We looked at really ensuring that we got on top of where things had been left by the previous Labor government. That changed, and there was a reversal and a weakening of those laws by the Labor government. Then we saw the Bourke Street situation with the Gargasoulas case, which was that horrific attack, and that is certainly very traumatic and memorable to me because 10-year-old Thalia Hakin was murdered by a person that was out on bail at the time because of weak bail laws. Those laws were then strengthened as a result of the Bourke Street attack, and then we saw them wound back in 2020. So the pendulum keeps shifting. Unfortunately who ends up worse for wear? Victorians end up worse for wear. We even had a situation in 2020 when the bail laws were weakened again and the government said, 'We're actually going to get to a situation where we don't even need the amount of prisons because we're going to ensure that we have different programs.' So a lot of our prison system had an early retirement scheme for a lot of our prison staff. This government shut down prisons. We saw the Malmsbury youth facility shut down, and we are now seeing the Port Phillip Prison being shut down. This is in the middle of a crime crisis.

The government can say they are doing all these wonderful things, but we know that there is a 1200-police shortage – they have not been hired – and we are five years away from police being at full strength. On top of that we have another 700 police that are on WorkCover and 300 on extended sick leave. So we are over 2000 police short in Victoria in the middle of a crime crisis. We do not have enough police, and the police that are doing the job are doing it with their arms tied behind their back, because literally as soon as they arrest somebody they are back out on bail, as we have seen.

Some of the changes proposed here still do not deal with bail for youth offenders. For example, a 16-year-old recently drove a stolen car while taunting police and the courts, reoffended and again was let back out. A 16-year-old had an alleged aggravated burglary spree within 48 hours of bail release, and a 17-year-old breached bail in under 48 hours and was involved in a deadly car crash whilst on bail. These are recent examples of young offenders under 18 that again will not be covered in these kinds of situations because the legislation excludes minors in these kinds of offences.

There are exclusions when it comes to robbery and burglary that the member for Malvern has suggested, again under our ‘break bail, face jail’ element, we would have included. There are a number of elements in this bill that are soft, that do not allow the strength of what ‘break bail, face jail’ would be under a coalition government, a Liberal–National government.

Even in this bill there is reference to electronic monitoring. This shows you just how bad this government is. This government, with electronic monitoring, gave a contract to a company called Bail Safe and had eight people disappear whilst on bail, whilst being electronically monitored. Why? Because Bail Safe went broke and this government had no idea what was happening. That just shows you how bad this government is. Everything they do is about catch-up. We have seen this government react, react, react, but unfortunately it is catch-up, and that is what has led to the crime crisis that we have. You only have to look at it. Whether it be tobacco licensing – we have pushed for tobacco licensing. We came in with a private members bill on how to do it. This government finally said, ‘You know what? We’ll catch up. We admit there’s a problem. We’ll do something.’ But again, they do not have proper enforcement. They only have four officers that go out there and do the job. We are seeing an underworld of activity – 130 tobacco stores have been firebombed under this government, and counting. And what does this government do? They give council workers the opportunity to go there and do the regulation of that stuff. Again, not strong enough, a catch-up but too weak.

The same thing applies to the machete ban. We called for the machete ban four times over a number of years. The government finally said it would do it. But how did they do it? You could not make it any worse. This is a government that said, ‘We’re going to do it, but what we’ll do is we’ll allow them to be sold until we get our act together. We’ll have a September date when people can hand them in in an amnesty.’ Well, that has been wonderful. Then with the pressure that we had, the government said, ‘Maybe we should make that sooner.’ Instead of banning the sale of machetes immediately, they gave people three days. What happened in the three days? We saw retailers discounting machetes to \$5 a machete. Then this government spent \$13 million on 40 machete bins. You could not make this stuff up. Now we are expecting thousands of machetes to be handed back, for good citizens, good Samaritans, to say, ‘You know what, let me just hand in my machete.’ I will bet you anything that with the \$5 machete that was being discounted and sold – the government should have just paid the retailers and taken them off the shelves immediately. If you work out the \$13 million from how many machetes we get back, I reckon each machete will cost thousands of dollars. That just shows you that instead of doing it properly this government does it haphazardly.

We see it in every single situation. It is the same with our laws when it comes to protest. They promised to ban masks and now that is going to be watered down, and who knows when that is going to happen? They promised stronger vilification laws. Where do you think that is? They did a dirty deal with the Greens and the Director of Public Prosecutions needs to approve any prosecution. Eight months later we are still waiting for the Nazis on the steps of Parliament to be charged. This is a useless government, a hopeless government, that gives us weak laws.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (14:53): I think I speak on behalf of the chamber in saying the member for Caulfield needs to pause, sit down and take a sip of water, because it is feeling kind of hysterical in here – quite ridiculous actually. I get sick of these kinds of performances, as much as I truly adore the member for Caulfield.

What I will do, as I rise to speak on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025, is make a call-out again in relation to machetes. People in my community, regardless of what your age is – whether you are a

young person, whether you are an adult – you have an amnesty until 1 September. If you have a machete, if you have a knife – it might be at your friend's, you might not have it at home; you might know of someone who has got them, but you do not want to dob them in – you have an opportunity to go to the disposal safety bins that are located in our community throughout the western suburbs. You have the opportunity to drop the knife and save a life. If you need another reminder about where they are, those safety disposal bins, they are in the safest place possible that machetes can be handed in: they are at the local cop shop. You can drop them off at Werribee police station. You can drop them off at the Sunshine police station or the Altona police station.

Drop in your knife and save a life. I really wish that the opposition would get behind the message to drop machetes – regardless of the price that people have paid, member for Caulfield – into those locations, to get rid of them or face serious consequences come 1 September.

What I will say on the outset on this bill is I really regret – I am looking around at my whip here – I did not get the chance last sitting week to speak on our bill to criminalise post-and-boast offences, because this kind of stuff is just so important.

Thanks to our government, Victoria has one of the strongest bail laws in this country. Despite what those opposite continue to say, the fact is we have one of the strongest bail laws in this country. We have taken action – real action – to make sure that community safety is at the forefront of our response to crime. I do not just want to say it is reactionary at the forefront of our response to crime. There is a power of work – and I had this conversation multiple times over the weekend – that is happening behind the scenes to actually prevent these crimes from happening in the first place. The prevention work that our government has implemented – not just in the last 12 months or 24 months but since we came to government in 2014 – to prevent crimes from happening in the first place has been unlike anything those opposite have ever attempted to put forward here in this house or go ahead and fund in their local communities.

I think it is really important when we are talking about bail, when we are talking about dropping in machetes and when we are talking about going to prison and facing serious consequences, that we do not want people, whether they are young people, whether they are adults – whoever they are, whatever background they are from – to commit crime in the first place. The power of work that is happening in that prevention space is something that needs to be talked about in this chamber by those opposite more often than not. Do you know what, it also needs to be put on the front page of newspapers like the *Age* and the *Herald Sun* just once in a while. They should go out and talk to the services and the organisations at the front line rolling out prevention work, working with people from all different backgrounds. Some people have stories of horrendous things happening to them and they are doing terrible things in our community, and we know they are most at risk. Just once I would like to see the front page of the *Herald Sun* thank those organisations and those workers for their tremendous work, their commitment, their dedication and their tireless work, particularly with young people and particularly with young people in the western suburbs. If any of those journalists are listening to this contribution, they should go and visit the Visy Cares Hub and see what some of those organisations are doing and the tireless work they do with youth across the western suburbs. They can start right there.

I want to get back to this bill, because there is some really good stuff in here. As I talked about, as of last week the number of remanded youth – and I know this has been talked about in this place – has increased by 26 per cent since this time last year. For remanded adults this has increased by 27 per cent. When we talk about the number of folks in remand increasing, it is not something to be proud or boastful about; it is one too many that have found themselves in a less than ideal situation, some of them doing horrendous things, that have now interacted with the justice system and are likely to end up in prison. But that is more people who are on remand and who are not out in the community, potentially committing all kinds of offences. That is something the community has been asking for, and that is something we have done. I know that in many ways my community are really happy to see that we are taking action and clamping down on these very serious criminal activities.

When we introduced to these tougher bail laws back in March this year, we said that a second piece of legislation would be coming and that we would continue to do the work, and it is now before the house. This bill is the second piece, the missing piece – a brand new bail test to apply to repeat offenders for the serious offences that we are trying to tackle and clamp down on. I will again make it clear: our government does not believe in a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to bail. We do not believe in punishing people for being poor. Yes, that does happen; we know it has happened in the past. It would be irresponsible for us to go down a pathway where we are punishing people for being poor, particularly in a cost-of-living crisis.

We do not think that folks who are charged with stealing a loaf of bread – yes, that still does happen – should be held in remand for months with people accused of murder.

Of course this is not the only thing we have done in respect to tackling crime over the course of the past two months. I have just talked about our nation-leading – we forget that: nation-leading – machete amnesty program to get dangerous knives and machetes off the streets before the ban comes into effect. Just last sitting week, as I also alluded to, we passed legislation in this place to tackle performance crime, the post-and-boast penalties for those who commit horrendous kinds of offences. And yes, it has happened in my community. It is absolutely appalling. They go ahead and they brag about this kind of activity through social media. Well, I certainly do not want my kids seeing this on social media. I do not want to have to watch it on social media. We know that it has become a big motivator for a lot of young people, concerningly, and these changes ensure that this element carries a two-year imprisonment penalty. Just down at Werribee police station a couple of months ago the Wyndham MPs had a great conversation with our local police force. Yes, we on this side spend a lot of time talking to local cops in our community. They actually are out on the beat in our local streets and neighbourhoods. One of the things they talked to us about is the problem with social media and kids getting on social media recording themselves doing awful things to other people and it being normalised – it is normalisation of violence. That is not something that is new, it is not something that is unknown, and cracking down on these kinds of offences with a two-year imprisonment penalty is a really good thing. With this bill's new test, the second-strike test for offenders on bail, we are making progress on stopping these crimes from happening and ensuring that our communities not only are safe in practice but feel safe as well. They are very much two different things – whether people are actually safe or they perceive themselves as being safe. I will always say that people need to actually be safe; that is more important than the perception.

I have no doubt that those opposite have had and will continue to have a lot to say on this bill. They will say it does not go far enough; we have heard that. They will say that we should just vote for the ad hoc legislation they try to shoehorn into our parliamentary business week after week. Better yet – and I am not sure if we have heard it yet, but I am sure it is coming – they will try to spruik their 'break bail, face jail' policy. My staff and I have had a laugh about that. We think it belongs on the back of a car as a bumper sticker. We have been very clear from the get-go about our bail reforms: they are firm but they are fair – and they must be fair. Those opposite seem to target the very worst and the most concerning of offences that Victorians are quite rightly worried about at the moment. Many of those offences do tend to happen in my local community in the western suburbs, whether it is in Wyndham or in Brimbank. But there is good news that I have been telling folks. Out on the weekend when I was doing two Saturday morning street stalls, we talked a lot about crime and we talked about a lot of the action that the Allan Labor government has taken and is continuing to take. I have to say it was received really well. People were really happy with the reforms that we are putting into place. I commend the minister for bringing this second but vital piece of legislation before the house, and I commend it.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (15:04): This bill is Labor's attempt again to patch over the mess that they made themselves when they weakened Victoria's bail laws in 2023. We have heard many contributions on this side so far – and there are many more to come, looking at the speaking list – that talk about the weakening that had a predictable and devastating consequence of repeat serious

offending. The government has promised the toughest bail laws in the country, and I have said repeatedly that we just want the best bail laws in the country so that our communities feel safe. What is in front of us today is not even as tough as laws that existed pre March 2024. Instead of delivering real protection for the community, Labor has cherrypicked six serious offences for a new high degree of probability test while quietly giving a free pass to dozens of other indictable offences, some of which, as we heard the member for Malvern say, could be linked to organised crime. Under Labor's bill for handling stolen goods there is no tougher bail test; dealing with the proceeds of crime, no tougher bail test; large-scale drug possession and drug trafficking, no tougher bail test.

I have heard from the other side today, as the member for Ripon indicated during her contribution, that the crime rate has not escalated, that it is just a perception. I want to give you a few indicators around what the crime rate has done in my local community of Mildura. I just googled a few of the crime stats. In the year ending March 2025 Mildura recorded 11,042 criminal incidents per 100,000 people, which makes it among the highest in regional Victoria. This was nearly 5 per cent higher than the previous year. That is an increase. Local crime trends are stark. Break-ins are nearly 150 per cent higher than the Victorian average. Motor vehicle theft is around 70 per cent higher, and this includes motor vehicles from farms. We have seen on-farm crime really escalate in the past few months. Violent crime stands at almost double what it was a year ago. Family violence breaches in Mildura have reached a 10-year high, which is just an absolute scourge. It is very obvious that that is a passion point, finding ways that we can bring that down. At the moment in Mildura an incident occurs every 4 hours, which deeply affects women's safety and affects children's safety, and there just does not seem to be even any acknowledgement. These numbers are not abstractions. These are our neighbours and our families and our friends. Is there anything in this that makes those people feel safer? No is the answer to that.

Let us be clear. This bill still leaves bail laws weaker than they were before. It is smoke and mirrors, designed to give the impression of action while avoiding the hard decisions needed to protect Victorians. If we are going to talk about some of the hard decisions and smoke and mirrors, let us look at the machete program with the bins. Those carrying machetes, I am sure, are very law-abiding citizens and will obviously take them to those very expensive bins. Where is someone going, 'Why are these bins \$350,000?' Where is anyone asking questions around this? It would be interesting to see who got the contract for that, honestly. And it will be even more interesting to see, when that program does eventually commence, how many machetes are actually collected. It would be very interesting to see that and to then put a return on investment figure next to it, which should be common practice you would think.

The member for Laverton said that she had not heard this side talk about our policy around 'break bail, face jail'. I think every member that has contributed on this bill so far has referenced it. We urge the government to at least have a look at the bill that was presented and that policy to reinstate commit indictable offence while on bail as a schedule 2 offence so bail is harder to get and to reinstate breach bail without reasonable excuse as a schedule 2 offence so breaches actually have consequences. If there are consequences for your actions, that is a deterrent and you would change your actions one would think.

We would remove the youth free pass for breaching bail. We heard the member for Morwell talk about the consequences for those that are put through the 'rinse and repeat', which is what Victoria Police call the judicial system, particularly with youth offenders at the moment. It is a rinse and repeat: in through the police station, out through the courts and straight back onto the street.

We heard the member for Morwell – and we do often in this place – talk about the consequences that have occurred for the Gordon family. I know that this is a very strong passion point for the member for Morwell, and he has really embedded himself within the Gordon family and is desperate to help. We heard during his contribution how even for the Gordon family and even for the member for Morwell, who is, like I said, very embedded in this issue, it is still as if the government is not listening

and will present bills such as this to get a media release out of and a media conference out of but not to actually have any consequences.

I do just want to touch quickly on the start date. The community cannot wait another seven months for this. We cannot wait until 31 March 2026, but that is what this bill is doing with the delayed commencement date – seven more months of risks and seven more months of repeat offending. So of course we support on this side of the house the reasoned amendment from the member for Malvern:

That all the words after ‘That’ be omitted and replaced with the words ‘this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the Allan Labor government:

- (a) urgently provides Victoria Police and Corrections Victoria with all resources necessary to implement this bill without further delay; and
- (b) adopts the Liberal and National parties’ ‘break bail, face jail’ policy to ensure that Victoria’s bail laws do not continue to fail to protect community safety.’

While we are talking about Victoria Police, I heard again the member for Ripon during her contribution say that she had spoken to Victoria Police members in St Arnaud that had said that they have never been better resourced. I do neighbour the electorate of Ripon, and in communities and stations surrounding Ripon if in fact there is a Victoria Police member in some of those small towns they are saying quite the contrary, and I speak to them on a weekly basis. There are single-member stations that are not resourced at all. There are over 50 vacancies in Mildura. They no longer have the embedded mental health clinicians in the station to support the Victoria Police members that are there. While this government talk about how much they have invested in recruitment, how much are they investing in retaining those police officers that have 10, 20, 30 or even 40 years of experience? You just cannot replace that. You cannot recruit that kind of experience.

Some of the things, honestly, that we hear come from the other side, when they are in complete contradiction to what I am sure all members on this side of the house interacting with their Victoria Police members and community members are hearing on a daily basis, are just mind-boggling. It is just another example of an Allan Labor government that refuses to listen to the community and refuses to do anything about it. If they were actually interacting with Victoria Police, they would know that is not the case, and if they were actually interacting with members of their community and victims of crime and those that are too scared to walk to the post office in the middle of the day, they would fully understand that this is simply not enough.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (15:14): I rise to also make a contribution on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025, and I would like to thank our fantastic member for Clarinda for allowing me the opportunity to make this contribution at this time. A lot has changed since I last had the opportunity to speak on bail act reforms approximately a year ago with the Youth Justice Bill 2024, but I do want to begin by reiterating two important points that have not changed since then. The first is the principle, very important to all of us in the Labor Party, that no child comes into this world wanting to be a criminal. No child chooses to be exposed to the neglect, to the abuse, to the family violence situations and to the other risk factors for interaction in the justice system, and more broadly, all of us should have the opportunity to learn from our mistakes in life.

I remember the member for Frankston and I had an exchange on this when this matter last came before the house, talking about the fact that we have had the opportunity to learn from our mistakes in our lives, and it is something that we should extend to everyone, including those who have come through some very difficult childhood circumstances. Of course our government is committed to programs that divert people away from the justice system not only within the justice portfolio itself but in all the work we do in the children’s portfolio, in education, in health and mental health and in other portfolios.

But I would like to reiterate a second important point that I have made previously, and that is we do need to understand that criminal behaviour is very difficult to predict ahead of time. It is not possible to know, walking around this state, who is about to commit a crime. We know that perhaps across the course of today there may be 10 shoplifting incidents. Some of them, maybe three or four of them,

will be committed by people who have never previously committed an offence. But there are 7 million Victorians. We do not surveil them all. There is no way of knowing who those three or four people are who may today, for the first time, commit a criminal offence. Even if you zoom in on high-risk cohorts – so young males and other groups that do have a higher risk of offending – it is still always the case that the vast majority of people have very, very little chance of committing any offence this year, let alone in the next few hours. I raise that because when people like the member for Richmond in her contribution say, ‘Why do you arrest people and lock them up? Why don’t you invest in education and mental health and support programs?’ it is frustrating because of course we do invest in all those things. This government invests in them very significantly and in fact increased our investment in the most recent budget.

It is important to understand that you do not know who is about to commit a crime. You cannot put those intensive support services in front of them before they do so. That is the reason why most of our support has always been directed at those who have already had an interaction with the justice system, and indeed when you think about the drug and alcohol support we provide, the housing support we provide to people, that support is typically provided at the point where someone has been charged but not yet convicted. I say that because it brings us to the real challenge in the justice area, which is that when someone has been charged of a serious offence, they are of course still innocent as a matter of law. There is no difference between them and any of the rest of us. They are innocent as a matter of status at that point. But what we know as a matter of statistical risk assessment, if you go and read what criminology academics and researchers say, it is an empirical fact that someone who has been charged with a serious offence is roughly 100 times more likely to commit a further offence, a different offence, throughout the rest of the year than the average person is. It is important to be clear that that is true even with the world’s best rehabilitation programs, with all the support you can have. There is no jurisdiction in the world that has been able to change the fact that someone who has been charged with a serious offence is more likely to offend than the average person in their society.

Bail decision makers always face what is a very difficult decision. On the one hand are the very real costs both to the state but more importantly to the individual themselves of denying someone bail and incarcerating them. None of us on the Labor side deny the negative consequences of incarceration, even for relatively short periods. But on the other side of that judgement that bail decision makers have to make is the very real risk – often a risk that is 10 per cent or 20 per cent, a very non-trivial risk – that the person they are facing will commit a further violent crime. So I find it very frustrating that the Liberals and the Greens simply do not engage with this key, difficult, risk-based trade off that everyone who is serious about our justice systems know is the key topic to engage with. In fact we had a very, very strange sight – members will appreciate the very unusual sight earlier today – when the member for Richmond and the member for Brighton agreed with each other, and agreed with each other unfortunately, on this nature that all the government was doing with this bill was going through a futile act of trying to look tough. I just absolutely reject that crude and juvenile characterisation of what we are trying to do here.

We are trying to support bail decision makers with what are undoubtedly some of the most difficult decisions that get made in our community. I want to engage with a particular version of that argument that some people make when they say we should just strip the Bail Act 1977 all the way back and make it a very short and simple thing. I particularly want to engage with the version of that argument put forward by the Yoorrook Justice Commission, which did incredibly important work which I think is incumbent on all of us to engage with. But in their recommendation they said we should strip back the Bail Act so that essentially bail is granted at all times unless the prosecution can prove a specific, serious or immediate risk to the safety of a person or to the administration of justice, with the exception of murder, terrorism and like offences. I absolutely understand where they are coming from with that important work. But when we speak with bail decision makers, they do say that it possibly still downplays the amount of pressure that is on bail decision makers when you have a Bail Act that essentially asks them to make all the judgement of risk with very little in the way of guidelines and

live, as they have to do, with the consequences of being wrong, knowing that you cannot get it right every time.

Coming back to where I started, crime is difficult to predict and sometimes those consequences will be very serious. If we put ourselves in the shoes of a bail decision maker who may have reached a decision that someone has a one-in-1000 chance of committing a child safety offence, for instance, which we have been talking about in this chamber, do you grant that person bail or not? It is an inherently very difficult question. I push back on the notion that the Bail Act should be simplified. I think the Bail Act is much improved for the work of this government in this term. I am pleased and I support the guidelines we put in there. It is an act that includes flowcharts, but I think the flowcharts are helpful, and it is an act that importantly takes into account someone's prior charges, their convictions and their behaviour on bail, which are statistically practicable risk indicators for re-offending. But importantly it also asks bail decision makers to take into account many other circumstances, including particularly importantly whether the accused is a child, whether they have a First Nations background and whether they have been involved in family violence circumstances.

I support today's Bail Act. I reiterate what I said: the Bail Act is much improved by the good work of this government over the course of this term. We have importantly removed those uplift provisions which previously saw people remanded for very low-level offences, as happened in the tragic Veronica Nelson case. We have substantially improved section 3A that sets out the First Nations factors and section 3B that sets out the factors relating to children. Importantly, this bill introduces further factors relating to pregnancy and caring responsibilities. We have retained and improved those parts of the bill that force someone to clear a higher burden for proving that they need bail for those schedule 1 and schedule 2 offences and amended the specific contents of schedules 1 and 2. We have retained that uplift from schedule 2 to schedule 1, and in this bill we are reinstating uplift for some other indictable offences into schedule 2, with the exceptions that are set out in schedule 4.

I briefly note the member for Malvern claimed that some of those offences were not crimes of poverty, and I would just point out to the member that if he had been paying proper attention to the debate, we never made such a claim. Some are, others are non-violent crimes, but I think it should be obvious to him why there are in that particular category. I think this is a good bill that ensures that we have the right settings in our justice system, and I commend it to the house.

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (15:24): I rise to speak on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025. There is no doubt that crime in Victoria, adult crime and youth crime, is out of control, and the reason it is out of control is because there are no consequences. Why a government would come in and, as one of the first things it does, reduce the severity of bail legislation to me makes absolutely no sense. The more you look at it and the more you talk to police and victims of crime, it is absolute madness. When the government comes in and says we now have the toughest bail laws in the country, people do not believe them, because under a Liberal–Nationals government the bail laws were tough. When Labor came into government, the bail laws were weakened and weakened and weakened. For some reason the government thought that this was going to be a good thing and would have no consequences.

We have to look at crime stats, and I am just going to look at the crime stats in my area and the effect that consecutive legislation changes by the government have had. In the last 12 months, to the year ending March 2025, crime in Knox increased by 16.4 per cent. When you look at it, there have been 112 crimes in houses; 281 crimes on the street, lane or footpath; 332 at service stations; 337 at shopping centres; and 138 in driveways and carports. When you look at Knox, Wantirna South has the highest number of criminal activities, and then it is Boronia and Ferntree Gully. It is just an awful, awful situation.

But let me tell you what used to happen under the Labor government when it came to crime stats. The Premier or the Minister for Police, under the previous Labor government before 2010, would stand up and cherry-pick particular crimes, and they just happened to be those crimes that had decreased. But the more serious crimes that had increased, the government and the Chief Commissioner of Police

would just forget about or just look over. That is why the Liberal–Nationals, between 2010 and 2014, introduced the independent Crime Statistics Agency. So we now believe what is actually happening in our community. How many times do you hear on TV that a crime has been committed by a young person who was on bail at the time?

Members interjecting.

Kim WELLS: Member for Brighton and member for Lowan, every single night we look at the television: ‘This crime was committed whilst they were out on bail.’ Then they go back before the magistrate and, lo and behold, guess what, they are released on bail again. There are no consequences, and people in the community are going, ‘What’s the point? What is the absolute point?’ We have no confidence in the government, and we have no confidence in the legal system should people be released over and over again. It used to be that if you committed a serious offence while you were out on bail, then bail was revoked and you went into a juvenile centre or you went back into the jail system. That went out the window under a weak, pathetic Labor government, and I just cannot believe that they did it. You have got these situations of 13-, 14-, 15-year-olds outrunning police in cars, ramming police cars and committing aggravated burglaries and home invasions. People are scared out of their wits.

I will give you an example. In my electorate there is a mum, dad and four kids. Three kids have gone through school and been house captains and school captains. Unfortunately, the 13-year-old got into marijuana. By 14 he was running with gangs. He is now 15, and he was being bailed over and over and over and over again – so much so that the mother rang me and said, ‘Kim, if he is not put in jail in a juvenile justice centre, he is going to commit a very serious crime which is going to maim someone or cause serious injury to someone, and as a family we will never be able to forgive ourselves.’ Unfortunately, in this situation, he has now moved from marijuana onto ice. That means that when they are committing these crimes they have no fear. Now, as a 15-year-old, when he is committing a crime with his gang, when they are running around, he has no fear. When they are in the car outrunning police, smashing into innocent people, there is no fear.

And part of the reason for that is because there are no consequences, because they know when they go up before the magistrate or the Children’s Court they will be let free and be back out on the streets. And how embarrassing is it when they give the finger, as they are walking out on the TV cameras, to the police or to other senior officials? It is just absolutely awful.

So we believe – strongly believe – that we should have tougher bail laws as crime continues to increase, youth crime is still out of control and young people are still being released on bail. The government said in the last lot of ‘tough’ bail laws – I think it was part of the bill – they were the toughest bail laws or something. They had a political slogan as part of a piece of legislation, a bill. How embarrassing is that? At least the upper house looked at it and said, ‘Absolutely no way.’ I still do not understand with this piece of legislation – and maybe the police minister can answer while he is here: why does it have a start date of 31 March 2026? Why not make it immediate? You have had years and years and years of crime out of control, so why wait another seven months? Can you imagine the crime? Imagine the amount of crime that is going to be committed in the next seven months. And what do we do? Point to the government and say, ‘This is your fault, because you should have acted more quickly’?

I had to smile to myself the other night on television – when they were just reporting more and more crime – that they have now got these machete bins that they have put around Victoria, where all these law-abiding citizens who have been running around injuring people are going to turn up to the police station and put them in. How does it cost \$325,000 per bin – per bin? I just do not understand the priorities. I do not understand the priorities of \$325,000 per bin.

Emma Kealy interjected.

Kim WELLS: Yes, it will be interesting to find out how much per knife. All these law-abiding young people are going to be putting in all these machetes.

I know that the Labor Party hate the slogan, they hate us being tough on crime, because what drives their policy is the polling. When they have done their polling they get into caucus and say, 'We've got a problem. We've got a really big problem. Crime is out of control and people are hating it and they're not going to vote for us, so we're going to buy some bins. They're \$325,000. That's what's going to fix it. And then we're going to bring in tougher' – tougher, they say – 'bail conditions,' which they are not. They are still not as tough as they were when they came into government in 2014. And as I said, the start date of 31 March 2026 is totally unacceptable. I hope that the police minister, when the bill is between here and the upper house, looks at that and says, 'That is absolutely ridiculous, that we are going to allow crime to be out of control for the next six or seven months.' We need to bring it in straightaway so we can start trying to get on top of the crime wave in this state.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (15:34): I too rise to speak on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 and in support of the bill of course. Before I begin my contribution I just want to acknowledge Saurabh Anand. On 19 July this year Saurabh faced a really difficult circumstance. He was out shopping in the local community down in Central Square and was approached by five people and ended up a victim of crime – a victim of really serious crime. I thank the Victorian police for arresting five alleged offenders, all the offenders that they were looking for. Saurabh, I know this is having a really big effect on your life – both the physical injuries but also the mental toll. We have spoken and we have exchanged emails, but I also want to thank particularly those people who are supporting you, Saurabh. I want to thank your mother, who flew in from India. I do want to thank Kanika, who has been such a strong supporter of you over this really difficult time; Sudhir, who you have been in contact with; as well as the Australian Hindu Community Incorporated. These have all been really important supports around you whilst you are struggling to recover. We will keep in touch and provide those supports that you do need. But we are thinking of you, and I have thought of you many times. Saurabh, I will be in contact again. Thank you again to all those people who are supporting you through this really tough time – and to Victoria Police, who have done their job in arresting the alleged offenders, as they should. They will have their day in court, and I look forward to that.

We are introducing stricter bail laws – of course we are, because we know there is more that needs to be done around community safety. This is the second tranche of bills. Our first tranche of bills has had a significant effect: 25 per cent more people are in prison on remand due to our previous bail changes. This is a significant change, and these laws prioritise community safety. I say to the community that I represent: we have more to do, and this is part of doing more around community safety. I meet many members of the community, whether it is in local parks, whether it is on their footpaths, whether it is in the office, and we talk about community safety and how important it is to the community that I represent.

There are a few things that I want to pick up from the member for Laverton. We were at the Werribee police station, Victoria's largest police station outside the CBD, recently alongside other members of Parliament from the south-west of Melbourne. Police officers there did talk about the rising challenges of community safety related to social media, and that is a matter that is also going to be before this Parliament. We also talked about some of those old-fashioned, really basic ideas that can help increase community safety, and they include locking your doors, locking your car doors, making yourself less likely to be a victim of crime. Members of the community that I represent have shown me videos of people who have been trying different doors or trying different car doors to undertake a criminal act. Some of these really basic actions make people less likely to be victims of crime. I do acknowledge also that we are doing a fair bit of work – and this has been a long time coming – in building Point Cook's first police station. That construction is underway right now. There are more than 140 officers who have been funded across the local community that I represent and others represent here, and these are really important investments.

I do take some umbrage with some of the comments made earlier, particularly from the member for Mildura talking about the return on investment when it comes to the machete ban. That is a really miserable set of accounting that is done by those opposite – a miserable set of accounting. Getting machetes off our streets should not be counted in dollars and cents, it should be counted in terms of those people who have avoided a really life-changing event. That is how they should be counting them. But instead the member for Mildura and others count the dollars and the cents. They do not count community safety, and it is just very disappointing that that is their fundamental focus. The member for Rowville belled the cat on their recent contribution around our previous legislation. Their contribution was to change the title. It is form over substance. It is the same as their obsession with ‘tough on crime’ as a slogan or slogans in general. It does nothing to make our community safer than it is currently, because we know there is more work to do, and we are up for that work. We are less worried, though, about the slogans, and we are less worried about the title of legislation. That is something that those opposite do care a great deal about.

The bill in front of us, the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025, is the second of two pieces of legislation to improve our bail laws, and if we need to come back to it, of course we will, because the role of government is to keep on improving the legislative circumstances that this state faces. The first package was passed in March, and I did talk briefly before, but the remand numbers are up as a result of it. In early August of this year the numbers were up 26 per cent for youth and 27 per cent for adults since the same time last year, so the bail laws are having exactly the intended effect of what we put forward in Parliament. We are delivering the toughest bail laws in the country, but also targeted and tough.

They are targeted to those people who are high-harm and repeat offenders. We include things like second strike rules for those who commit indictable offences. The Liberals, however, take the view of lock them all up. We talked a little bit about loaves of bread. It reminded me more of the days of convicts and those people who were sent from the United Kingdom to Australia and that approach to crime. It is ‘Lock em all up and hope that they’re locked away forever.’ The sad news is that those people who are locked up for low-level offences, for non-violent offences, face the same circumstances as all others, which is they go into youth jail, into our justice system. The facts are –

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Kim O’Keeffe): Order! There is too much talk in the chamber. I am finding it hard to hear the member on his feet. Thank you.

Mathew HILAKARI: for those young people aged 10 to 16, in the 12 months following leaving imprisonment, whether on remand or as a regular part of the jail system, 52 per cent of them return to prison, and they often commit worse crimes afterwards. That is a real challenge of our system in general. We want to make sure that we are targeting the right people to end up on remand or in prison.

The bill outlines a new test for those people who are seeking bail. For those people who have been charged with serious schedule 1 offences, including aggravated home invasion, aggravated carjacking, armed robbery and aggravated burglary, we are introducing the high degree of probability test. This is really aimed at speaking to bail decision makers and the high degree of probability that an accused will not commit another serious offence while on bail – because that is what we are really hoping to achieve, that those people who are on bail understand the privilege that bail is and they do not commit another serious offence in particular. It sends a clear message to both offenders and bail decision makers.

The second strike rule is another significant element of this bill, which is for those people who are already on bail for an indictable offence. If they are charged with committing another indictable offence, they must meet the show compelling reason test. They must meet this threshold alongside the unacceptable risk test. This is important because it puts the onus back on those people who are seeking bail to achieve that privilege of being on bail, because it is a privilege. For those that are not charged

with those higher offences but rather low-level, non-violent offences – we are talking shoplifting, low-level theft, low-level property damage and drug possession – those people will not face these same higher thresholds, and rightly so, because there is no need to have people who are committing low-level, non-violent offences in jail with those who have committed higher level offences. Certainly when I speak to members of the community, they agree when you put it to them in those terms.

I would like to finish by saying we are introducing stricter bail laws. There is a reason for doing it – because we do need to address community safety, and we will continue to do so. These laws have been successful so far. Our first tranche in March has produced 25 per cent more people who are on remand than the previous year. This is balancing the laws and priorities of community safety in our state. We will continue to make sure that we have the facilities that we need, like the Point Cook police station as well as the Werribee police station and more police funded across the community that I represent.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:44): I rise to speak on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025. We are here again because this government is trying after failing, after weakening our state's laws when it comes to bail, when it comes to making sure people on our streets and in their homes are safe. They are not safe. We know that. We know it because not only are Victorians feeling it with these crimes but even the government has been brought to the point of acknowledging it, although not acknowledging it in a way that they can work out how to fix it. They certainly do not know how to fix it, but they have acknowledged it. I remember the day when the now Treasurer, then Attorney-General, said there was no youth crime crisis, that it was not happening.

I remember when former Premier Andrews stood up and said that people in my community and I did not understand crime data, and now Victoria Police have confirmed the youth crime crisis started in Bayside – what a pig of a man he was.

We are here again today because we have the government trying to solve a problem they created and they do not know how to fix it. When it comes to bail, they have again tried to fix the bail revolving door, and we know that the worst crimes are being committed by people over and over again. Not that long ago in my community there was a very serious home invasion, where the police did a fantastic job and later that same day caught the two crooks involved. They were caught in the middle of Church Street, Brighton, which shut down the street – a packed street – and the police arrested them, which was fantastic. But with the entire crowd watching, guess what the youth offender said to their mate as they were being arrested? 'See you in a couple of hours when I get bailed,' they shouted to their friend. What a disgrace – and Victorians know it. They know that these fixes are not actually doing what needs to be done, and that is shutting the bail door. That is what you need to do; you need to stop the revolving door. The reason why there is a revolving door is because this government is soft and sides with criminals. That is what they do, and we know they do, especially when it comes to youth offenders, because they believe that people should not only be given a second chance but should be given a 20th chance, a 50th chance, a 100th chance, over the rights of the victims. That is why we have this problem in this state; it is by design. Consequences do not exist, because this government believes in giving endless chances to people who are committing the worst crimes. The government can have us here trying to solve the problem they created over and over again, and we know it will not fix it.

Can you imagine being such a limp-wristed government that you bring a bill in that supposedly deals with a very, very serious issue in the community and then not implement it for seven months? How could you possibly do that? How could you possibly say that it is going to take seven months before you are going to actually implement the laws that you say are necessary and needed now? It is not just on this bill; we know it is the previous bills and laws that the government has brought into this place. We saw it with the post-and-boast laws, which were supposed to deal with people glorifying the crimes they commit – seven months to bring about those changes. How can you bring in an urgent bill and say, 'We're going to put it away for seven months if it gets through the Parliament?' What a disgrace. On machetes, you are seeing people going to a shopping centre – innocent people – and having their hand chopped off, and this government announced a machete ban that they did not bring in for three

months. On bail – seven months. Post and boast – seven months. It is just extraordinary. Machetes – three months. How can you possibly propose laws that deal with keeping people safe from the most violent crimes and delay them for months and months and months on end? You should be implementing them immediately, as we have tried to do. We have brought in our own proposed changes. We have sought to amend the bills the government tries to bring in, to bring them on more speedily. The government does not want to bring them on. They do not want to bring these reforms in quickly, because they will always side with the criminal over the victim.

It is in their DNA. We have not talked about this: the most important bail reforms that are needed, which the government promised they would bring in when the Premier admitted, finally, there might be a problem – and we have got the minister at the table, so he might be able to inform us – were going to be brought in later this year. The Premier said and the government briefed it out to the media that those reforms would be in later this year. Well, guess what we found out this week? Those reforms will not be brought in until next year – of course they will not be. They have delayed not acting. Not only did they announce they were not going to act till later this year, they have now announced they are going to delay not acting – how completely hopeless.

If it only affected them, no-one would worry, but this affects community safety. This affects the lawlessness on our streets, not just in people's homes, where we have seen the most violent crimes, but in my community, where police have said the youth crime crisis started. My community cares because we are the victims. It is what you see on the streets now every single week. You have a government that promised to bring in face mask ban reforms to ensure that violent offenders who are protesting on the street cannot cover their faces so that no action can be taken against them. Where is that? There has been an eight-month delay on action there. It is eight months since it was promised – eight months – and we have seen no sign of it. All we will see is every Labor member voting against proposed laws today which would have taken action on that. We have seen a seven-month delay on bail and a seven-month delay on post and boast. We have seen a three-month delay on machetes, and we have seen an eight-month delay and still no time of action on the face mask ban. And on the most-needed bail reforms we see a delay on a delay. How can you possibly imagine a government announcing they will not act and then further announcing they are going to delay when they will not act? That is what has happened when it comes to bail.

This government is an absolute disgrace when it comes to law and order. The most important thing is that the community knows it. Every single member on that side of the chamber knows it, and that is why they are pushing for reforms. Let me give the members on that side of the chamber an insight. Your community also knows that these actions and these reforms are not fixing the problem. What is so terrible, though, is you cannot see them standing up and calling for the reforms that are needed. We need to be tougher. We need to have consequences built into our system. We need to make sure that the worst offenders are not allowed out of the revolving bail door that exists in this state. The community knows about the lawlessness that exists. The community are victims to these crimes. They have had enough. This government is weak, weak, weak when it comes to crime, and Victorians know it.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (15:54): I join the member for Point Cook and the previous speaker on this side of the house to support the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025. I do so because I know that this is another important bill, one that will implement the second tranche of the bail reform to increase community safety and wellbeing by reducing repeat offending. Community safety has been a big priority for this government recently. I was happy to be involved in the debate on our tough bail bill to put community safety above all in bail decisions and remove the principle of remand as the last resort, creating the toughest bail laws ever for serious offenders, including a new bail test, which is extremely hard to pass, targeting repeat offenders for the worst crimes.

It was a really important measure, and we are seeing the result in the remand rate. That is really important because there was a really clear expectation from the community on this. It is one of the most common concerns, as we acknowledge, in my community, and it is still a major concern in many,

along with the importance of quality public health care, major infrastructure projects and local development. We will keep working hard, particularly around community safety, and we will continue to work around the government's new tough bail laws to keep Victorians safe by putting community safety above all and creating the toughest bail law ever for serious offenders, targeting repeat offenders of the worst crimes. We can see that here today once again, and that is why I am supporting this bill.

Again I would like to say thank you to all of those in my constituency for spending their time raising community safety with me while I have been doorknocking, at mobile offices or at the electorate office. The feedback is important to me, it is important to this government, and we acknowledge that. We have seen some positive change which sends a clear message that community safety must be placed above all, and we will keep working to make sure that is the case and that we have the legislation to keep our community safe and to keep our justice system operating efficiently and effectively. We will continue the important work here today. Even last sitting week we made further amendments with the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crimes) Bill 2025, prohibiting a person from publishing material to draw attention to their involvement in serious offences like theft of a motor vehicle, burglary, home invasion, carjacking and robbery. We can see a clear agenda and focus from the government, and I commend the Attorney-General for bringing this bill forward, along with other relevant ministers and the Premier, sending another strong message that community safety comes first. As I said, the work continues here today with the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025, building on that work and implementing the second tranche of bail reform to increase community safety and wellbeing by reducing repeat offending through safeguards in this act.

There are several elements to this reform. Firstly, the bill will introduce a new high degree of probability test for people accused of committing specific high-harm, high-risk offences in schedule 1 of the Bail Act 1997 while on bail for another specific schedule 1 offence. That is another change that will make it harder for alleged serious repeat offenders to get bail. Specifically, this test means that the risk of committing a schedule 1 or schedule 2 offence will be another unacceptable risk, and bail must be refused unless the decision-maker is satisfied to a high degree of probability that the accused will not commit a specific schedule 1 offence if released on bail. Where the high degree of probability test applies, bail must be refused unless the bail decision maker is satisfied that there is a high degree of probability that the accused will not commit a specific schedule 1 offence if released on bail. This is a very strong change building on previous changes. Further, we have changes that will uplift those charged with an indictable offence whilst on bail for another indictable offence to a stricter bail test. This is another strong change that will further protect the community from harm caused by repeated high-harm offending, subjecting specifically people accused of this repeat offending to more stringent tests that make it more likely that they will be refused –

The SPEAKER: Order! The time has come for me to interrupt business for the grievance debate. The member will have the call when the matter is next before the Chair.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Grievance debate

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That grievances be noted.

Early childhood education and care

Jess WILSON (Kew) (16:01): I rise to grieve for the children of Victoria because the Labor government has failed to keep them safe in child care. We are here today because the children of Victoria have been failed – failed by a system that is meant to protect them, failed by a toothless regulator which is meant to act before more harm occurs and failed by a government that was warned repeatedly but chose to do nothing.

When we are elected to this place our foremost duty is clear: protect the vulnerable, and there is no one more vulnerable than a child in the care of an adult. Every parent in Victoria should feel confident that when they drop their child at child care they will be safe. Their confidence has been shattered. The system is broken. These failures are not hypothetical; they are real. They have names and they have consequences. Joshua Brown is now facing more than 70 charges relating to the sexual abuse of eight babies and toddlers aged between five months and two years at a centre in Point Cook. Brown worked at up to 24 childcare centres over eight years. Two complaints were substantiated before his arrest, one for aggressive handling of children and another for physically grabbing them. Yet he still held an active working with children check and moved between centres unchecked. The scale of the fallout is almost impossible to comprehend. Authorities have identified 2000 children for STI testing – that is 2000 homes living with fear and anxiety, having experienced their worst nightmare. Parents trusted the system. The system gave Brown clearance after clearance, and because of that failure children have suffered unimaginably.

Ronald Marks was arrested in 2021 for possessing almost 1000 child abuse images. Last month he was convicted, but he retained an active working with children check for four years after his arrest. That meant that in those years following his arrest Marks was permitted to go into childcare centres and kinders. This is a catastrophic breakdown of the very checks that are meant to keep predators away from children. The ABC has reported today that a childcare educator maintained a valid working with children check despite being dismissed from a childcare centre in 2020 for sexual misconduct after an internal investigation found he was grooming and kissing toddlers. Again, the system allowed this individual to continue to work in childcare centres, with the government regulator not stepping in to issue a prohibition notice to blacklist that individual until last year. Yet despite this prohibition, until a few hours ago, the individual had not even had his active working with children check tested or checked.

Now we learn it is still active, meaning as of this afternoon this individual, who was dismissed from a childcare centre for sexual misconduct, can still work with children in this state. What is the government doing to fix the very system that is meant to keep children safe in this state? It should not take a media report to shame the government into taking action to keep children safe.

And then we have the regulator, QARD, the quality and regulatory division of the Department of Education, a secretive, opaque and ineffective unit that sits in the department and is failing to keep children safe. There have been too many failures of this toothless regulator to do its job – centres left open for months despite serious safety breaches being known to the regulator and centres remaining open despite being ordered to close by the regulator because the regulator's enforcement process is as slow as it is meaningless in these urgent and dangerous cases when it comes to child safety. Since 2018 complaints to the regulator about childcare providers have increased by 45 per cent, yet over the same period enforcement action has declined by 67 per cent. In 2018 there was one enforcement action for every 20 complaints. By 2023 that figure was one for every 88. That is the regulator stepping back when it should be stepping in to keep children safe. These case studies show exactly why the system is broken, but they also show something else – sadly, the unwillingness of the Allan Labor government to put politics aside and constructively work to fix the system, to work with this Parliament to ensure that children's safety is the absolute priority of any elected representative.

The Victorian Ombudsman told the government in 2022 that the working with children check system was among the weakest in the nation. The Ombudsman recommended very clear sensible reforms: give the regulator the power to act on credible risk information even without a conviction or a charge, allow the secretary to obtain and consider any relevant information to determine suitability and keep suspensions in force until appeals are resolved. The Ombudsman was clear: these changes would have brought Victoria in line with other states and would help protect children. But what did the government do? Nothing. They did not even have the courtesy to reply. Three years on, and still nothing. Even the regulations that have been put in force in the last month do not go as far as what the Ombudsman recommended to the government three years ago, meaning that those dangerous loopholes that we

know are being exploited by dangerous people working with children in this state have not been fixed, because this government is more interested in managing the politics than putting children's safety first.

Faced with the consequences of their inaction and warned repeatedly, the government has launched a so-called rapid review. That rapid review is a review of reviews that have already been put in place and made recommendations that the government has ignored. Of course as part of their rapid review they appointed a former Labor Premier to help manage that political fallout – a former Premier who oversaw the worst child abuse issues in South Australia's history. Not only have they said that this review is simply a review to look at other reviews, but what did the government do? They explicitly excluded the regulator from being part of the review.

The supposed watchdog that is meant to be keeping children safe in childcare centres is not even part of the review. The terms of reference explicitly state that the performance and the governance of the regulator is out of scope. What is this review going to achieve if it cannot even look at the very body that is meant to be enforcing the child safety standards to ensure children are safe in child care here in Victoria?

Behind every one of these cases is a family, and behind every one of these statistics is a child who expects that the adult looking after them will keep them safe and protect them. Imagine being the parent of a six-month-old and being told you must take them for an STI test because a childcare worker, who passed all the tests and the checks, is alleged to have abused them. Imagine being the Horsham parent who kissed their child goodbye one morning, none the wiser that a man who despite having been arrested for possessing child abuse material still had an active working with children check and was visiting that childcare centre that day to spend time with your child. These are not isolated mistakes. They are the result of a government that refuses to treat child safety as its highest priority, that refuses to heed the advice from the experts to make the changes that will ensure that children are safe in this state.

We cannot wait for another review. That is why the Liberal and Nationals coalition sought to introduce the Worker Screening Amendment (Safety of Children) Bill 2025 just last sitting week in the Parliament. Our bill does exactly what the Ombudsman recommended. It gives the secretary the power to act immediately on credible information without waiting for charge or conviction. It links the working with children check system to the Victoria Police database so that any risk triggers immediate action. It keeps suspensions in place until appeals are resolved so that children are not exposed in the meantime. It reduces the validity of checks from five years to three, and it requires mandatory training in child safety and reporting obligations and child abuse awareness – commonsense, practical reforms informed by the experts and the Ombudsman. Yet those opposite decided that politics were more important than child safety and voted down those reforms that would have strengthened child protection laws in this state.

But legislation alone is not enough. That is why we have put forward six urgent reforms. Number one, as I said, is to fix the working with children check system; two, give parents the right to know centre-by-centre safety data, star ratings and full incident transparency; raise the bar on workplace standards and mandatory training and introduce a central register of all qualified workers so that should the worst happen, we do not see the same result of the police scrambling to work out where an alleged offender worked and then having to track down families to tell them that their worst nightmare has just come true; create an independent childcare safety watchdog – a new authority to investigate and enforce compliance across the childcare sector; ban phones immediately and install CCTV; and work with the government to link federal funding to safety standards. These measures are practical, they are achievable and they are supported by child safety experts and survivor advocates, and they could be in place right now, today, if the government was willing to work constructively with the opposition, put children's safety first and ensure they are doing their job to protect the most vulnerable in our community.

The safety of our children should never be a partisan issue, yet the Allan Labor government refuses to engage constructively. We have seen day after day now the Premier refuse to answer basic questions about how the system is operating and where the gaps are so that we can fix them. If there is more to do after the so-called rapid review, we will stand with them. We will pass additional legislation as a matter of urgency. But right now, today, the government could work with us to close loopholes and strengthen the system to protect children.

Every day that they delay is another day that children are at risk in child care. Every week they stall is another week where parents are wondering if their children safe when they drop them off. The unwillingness of this government to put politics aside is not just incredibly disappointing; it is dangerous, because it puts children's safety at risk. We grieve for the children of Victoria, but it must be more than words. It must drive action.

We have done the work. We have the urgent solutions. What we do not have is the political will from those opposite. Premier, put politics aside. Stand with us, pass these reforms and show parents across Victoria that when it comes to protecting children this Parliament speaks with one voice – we know what our duty is, our sacred duty when we are elected here, and we will come together and we will put children's safety first. Our children deserve nothing less. History will not be kind to those who failed to act or – worse – stood in the way of action. This is a moment for action, and we on this side of the house are ready to lead.

Worker entitlements

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (16:16): It is great to rise and contribute to the grievance debate. I grieve for a future that is ever led by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Brighton. We have seen in recent days an extraordinary attack on the rights of working people in Victoria and in this nation, with the commentary on people's right to work from home. I will go through a litany of that in the next little while to take you through. But in the words of the member for Brighton himself:

This government is expert in paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to back office bureaucrats who aren't delivering any services for Victorians ...

And he said that thousands of back office staff had a 'sweetheart deal'. That is how the member for Brighton describes the public service here in opposing the right to work from home.

This is a significant frontier in supporting Victorian families into the future. We have seen this announcement made by the Premier, which is a landmark announcement coming forward. What is really curious in this is they have more positions on this policy than a kaleidoscope. There are so many different frames that we see. We see a very close colleague, a federal member in the Canberra Parliament and a very close regional ally of the member for Brighton, Tim Wilson – you might have heard of him. Tim Wilson describes working from home as 'apartheid'. Oh my goodness, to describe the rights of people to work from home and have balance in their life in such a way – what an extraordinary comment. That was like, in cricketing terms, a bit of a half-volley – you know, just to send that back. I thought the member for Berwick and Leader of the Opposition would put that over the fence. If anyone heard the media interview with Tom Elliott, it should have been a bit of a through to the keeper. The member for Hawthorn has had a few goes on there. He was not as friendly to the member for Hawthorn with the back end of some of their programming. But it is a bit of a free go to get your confidence up as a new opposition leader: 'What is the weather today?', 'How bad is Labor?' and those kinds of questions. You would think this one you could put over the fence. You would think this one he could put into the crowd – see ball, hit ball. No. He could not form a position on working from home.

This opens up a significant frontier in the destabilisation of policy on that side and how disorganised the opposition is, because the member for Brighton is firmly opposed to the rights of Victorians to work from home. The Leader of the Opposition does not have a policy that is not defined by what he

reads at 5 am or 6 am in the clips of the *Herald Sun*. Do not take my word for it. I will go to the puff piece that was in the *Herald Sun* in June 2025. I do not know if you have come across this, but it is a bit of a goodie. This one's title is 'Those who still see Matthew Guy as a viable replacement look to Jeff Kennett's record as losing two elections before finally winning government'. Ironically, history repeats itself. It is August now, and the spring blooms are coming. It is the penultimate year before we hit an election campaign, and you just see the momentum of the member for Bulleen start to roll. We feel that now – we feel the energy and the purpose. You saw just a bit more noise in question time. It is always a bit of a signal that we are coming into the season here. Well, what do those opposite describe the member for Berwick, the Leader of the Opposition as? The article says:

Battin's –

as they call him, or the member for Berwick's –

leadership has failed to excite colleagues and members in his first six months ...

They say in this article:

In recent weeks mutterings about Battin's leadership have evolved into open conversations among colleagues.

It is extraordinary when you see this; this was meant to be the saviour of unity coming through. There was the former Leader of the Opposition the member for Hawthorn when the member for Malvern was polling well at that time – there are too many eerie similarities here – and he was doing all right, up in that sort of territory, and then in came the member for Bulleen, and then it all sort of cascaded off a bit. Maybe it was a bit because of the former member for Kew and what he was up to.

But you see now a diminishing and an undermining and the backgrounding of colleagues once again, and it means that they are not fit for government. One only has to look at the massive internal nuclear hit on the member for Nepean. It was an extraordinary piece – an extraordinary piece – that was utterly personal, utterly despicable. And you read that and you go, 'Gee whiz, if anyone had that feeling about me in the Labor Party, goodness me, I'd just walk off and that would be it.' But that absolute brutality shows that they are absolutely divided and cannot govern themselves.

When you count it up, there used to be more Davids than women on the front bench. Do you remember that era? Now there are more Liberals in court than not in court. It is absolutely extraordinary. I used to be on the administrative committee of the ALP, and it used to get a bit wheeling and it would be a few hours. Touch wood – I never saw an opportunity to go down to the court circuit and then make a lodgement. That is what we are dealing with here. This is the level of behaviour of those that want to govern Victorians. When you are more interested in smashing each other than actually governing and doing the work in policy –

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, member for Mordialloc.

Tim RICHARDSON: Sorry, Speaker. There we go. Yes. A good reminder there – smashing those opposite. You see that and you go, 'What is this really about?' It is about power for power's sake. When you look at some of the reports around working from home and the productivity gains, you think of those economic wizards over there who always talk themselves up. Remember that old chestnut, 'Oh, we can manage major projects; we do so well.' They had nine major projects in the Napthine-Baillieu years. Do you know how many we have had on this side? 392 major projects, government projects. For those opposite one of those major projects, I have it on good authority, was putting the stickers down at Southern Cross station. Remember that? There was a procurement requirement that the stickers came from Officeworks, supporting local jobs and local workers. And then you had the stickers put down. Poor tourists used to walk out of Southern Cross destined for Melbourne Airport, and they would just head to the V/Line. They would end up out in Warrnambool. They would end up in Bairnsdale going, 'Hang on, I thought I was going to airport rail. These stickers said "There's airport rail coming"; what is going on?' That is the economic wizards over there.

Roma Britnell interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: Well, if you just read the productivity report – and the member for South-West Coast comes in off the short run here – the productivity report right here says that work from home is productive for the Victorian and the Australian economies. And my learned friends, those opposite, if they bothered to read this, would see that this is just absolute gold rather than apartheid, as the member for Goldstein says – or the member for Brighton demanding they come back. Peter Dutton, the former Leader of the Opposition, was not one for rolling back, but remember that press conference? ‘Oh, we got it wrong. We listen; we listen.’

Roma Britnell interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: The member for South-West Coast says, ‘Talk about something.’ They are opposed to work from home. This is a significant government policy.

Roma Britnell interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for South-West Coast, rein it in.

Tim RICHARDSON: Those opposite are opposed to work from home, and those in the South-West Coast electorate are going to be punished because of the policies of the member for South-West Coast. And this is why. An expert, a professor at the University of New South Wales, Professor Ahuja of the business school, said – this was the headline here:

I don’t know if it’s intentionally anti-women to ask people to come back to [office] work full time, but it’s important to consider that in the decision-making because if you don’t, it ends up being anti-women ...

this policy. She also said:

Although 36 per cent of Australians regularly work from home, research shows women are disproportionately affected by directives to return to the office ...

I am someone who does a bit of empirical research in the work that I do. I try to bring a bit of research. And I thought, ‘What could be a correlation to not understanding a policy is anti-women? Would it be representation and quotas in representation in the Parliament – if those opposite had a few more voices around the cabinet table?’ Remember their representation in the federal Parliament, the lack of female representation, and the lack of frontbench representation here. And it just shows.

It just shows that when you do not have the representation in your party room, when you do not respect the views of women in Victoria, you come up with policies that are not sanctioned by shadow cabinet and have an absolute brain thought from the member for Brighton to ban work from home. That is right: Victorian workers will suffer under those opposite with a ban on working from home. They will oppose this policy. A close confidant and friend of the member for Brighton, the member for Goldstein, described this as apartheid. You could not describe in more inflammatory terms supporting workers and supporting women in the workforce.

A part-time framework for this is said to increase productivity and be good for the Victorian and the Australian economies. If you are only looking at the economics of how significant and important this is, this is the right policy to be talking about; this is the right thing to do. But I think those opposite are too divided, too disconnected from their constituency and the people that they hope or plead to serve and more interested in serving those that put them into their positions – their local membership or their administrative committees – to actually then front up to this policy, and we see that. Just reminding people: the member for Brighton is opposed to it, the member for Berwick does not know what day it is and the member in the federal Parliament describes it as apartheid. These are the kinds of conversations that Victorians will be having into the future about the approach to work from home. That is the contrast right there of those opposite.

Richard Riordan interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: The member for Polwarth intervened. Do you remember the member for Polwarth had that beautiful interview on ABC where he said, ‘Oh, I support the current leader for

currently for current now'? Remember that sort of word salad? This is the member for Polwarth who ran for Liberal leadership and then backed off because he knew the numbers were not quite there and then became the numbers man for the member for Berwick. I would be very sceptical about someone who counts to 10 on one hand – who knows where the member for Polwarth's support will go? Remember, the member for Bulleen – it is the time right now when the member for Bulleen comes back into frame and comes back into focus. We are all interested and excited about this. The Shannon Deery article in the *Herald Sun* did not happen by accident. Shannon Deery is not sitting there going, 'You know what I'm going to write about today? A Jeff Kennett return by three and make the analogy to Matthew Guy.' No, that comes from backgrounding. That comes from multiple sources – you get on the phone, and there are half a dozen, maybe a dozen, that all have a bit of running commentary on the Liberal leadership.

I do feel for the Nationals, because they do carry the team a bit. They have had their leadership change; they are far more settled in that, even though the member for Gippsland South, remember, got admonished for wanting to run away from the coalition. The member for Gippsland South had intellectual property on this before it was cool in the federal Parliament. The member for Gippsland South was begging his colleagues to leave the coalition agreement in November 2022 and got admonished, got told, 'That's not the right thing to do.' But they are tucked in with this group that is more interested in suing themselves into oblivion than actually governing this state.

We see some of the videos and presentations put forward – snappy grabs that people get on the social media over there – but they cannot answer this question: what makes those opposite fit to govern when they cannot govern themselves? What makes those opposite trustworthy to the Victorian people when they are more interested in taking each other to court? How many – are we up to three or four leaders now that are in the courts, in that sort of frame? Are we seriously saying that this is a viable mob, on that side, to govern Victorians?

When they come in with another harebrained idea around policy – and we see this around the opposition to work from home, when it stacks up, when it is important, when it is inclusive. Just think of this, right? For those people that travel, in my electorate, up the Nepean Highway and the Mordialloc Freeway each and every day, the Monday and Friday flanks are always quieter. Work from home benefits everyone: it takes more traffic off local roads, it gives people the balance in their life, it keeps people in the workforce longer, it supports their mental health and wellbeing and it retains workers for longer. It is always curious that the biggest voices opposed to work from home are conservative blokes, isn't it? It goes back to that fundamental point that when those opposite have more blokes on that side and do not support proportionate representation of half of the population of Victoria and Australia – and that is a massive debate prism at the moment in their federal scene – then how can they relate to the policies that are anti-women, as described by experts in tertiary education?

The next election will be a significant contrast. They want to rip away the rights of workers to that flexibility and the support to work from home, which disproportionately impacts women. More than one in three are working from home at the moment. Those that have been retained in the workforce have that flexibility and have the cost-of-living savings that that brings. We know that if you are working from home, everyone benefits from that reduced impact and the broader productivity benefits.

All of the evidence stacks up, but those opposite just do not get it. I just cannot for the life of me come to how they could come up with a policy position like that. I have hypothesised around their leadership. I have hypothesised around that they have not done the work or have not done the reading. All I can think of now is that once again it is about leadership and it is about thought bubbles out of the shadow cabinet without any sort of conclusion. We know the member for Brighton is fiercely opposed. We know that those in the federal Parliament describe it as apartheid. We know that the member for Berwick would scrap work from home. He would cut absolutely huge amounts of jobs. He would drive our economy down. It would hit productivity into the future, and that is why those opposite are not fit to govern. When they are too busy suing each other, when they are too busy trying to destroy

the career of the member for Nepean, when they are backgrounding on the member for Hawthorn, when they are taking out the member for Malvern, this crew will never be able to govern Victoria.

Early childhood education and care

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (16:31): I rise today to grieve for the children of Victoria because the Labor government has failed to keep them safe in child care. As a mother, I grieve for those babies – the most vulnerable – who were supposed to be safe in the places we trust most. As a member of Parliament, I am angry. I am angry that the very government entrusted with protecting them has chosen delay, distraction and political self-interest over decisive action. I am angry that the warnings that were ignored continue to be ignored, and I am angry that the loopholes remain open. I am angry that parents are still being told to trust a system that has failed them time and time again.

We have entered a frightening time when the media and not the government exposes that a Victorian childcare educator who was deemed such a serious risk to children that he was formally blacklisted from the industry still to this day holds a valid working with children check. Despite this prohibition order, his card has not been revoked or suspended. This should horrify absolutely every parent and carer in this chamber. This should horrify every Victorian. This is not a loophole on paper. This is a live, dangerous failure in the very system meant to protect our children.

My grievance is with the Allan Labor government, and it is a government that has chosen politics over the protection of our children. Protecting children should never be a partisan issue. I have three beautiful children, and I believe that keeping children safe is not negotiable. It is the standard we must all be held to regardless of politics. It should be the one area in which every single member of this chamber can agree that the highest possible standard must be applied. This is not an issue that should be influenced by political advantage, and it is not about managing headlines. This should be about protecting our most vulnerable members of our community, yet here we are once again watching the Allan Labor government put politics first and safety last.

Last sitting the Liberals and Nationals introduced urgent reforms to overhaul Victoria's broken working with children check system, and these were reforms that would have closed loopholes, strengthened protections and put child safety first immediately. What did Labor do? They voted them down. They voted them down because once again the Premier and her team would rather protect themselves than protect Victorian children. The Worker Screening Amendment (Safety of Children) Bill 2025 was common sense, practical and immediate. That is what we need. We do not need delays.

The solutions were allowing this government to act now to enable parents to drop their children off immediately and know that they are safe. It would have strengthened the ability to revoke or refuse a working with children check, empowered assessors to consider a broader range of relevant risk factors and acted on the Victorian Ombudsman's 2022 recommendations in full, recommendations that Labor has ignored for three long years.

Three years is a very long time in politics, but for a child in harm's way that is an eternity, an eternity that can go on to define the rest of their life. As a parent, and there are many in this chamber who are awfully silent, I cannot comprehend why any government would knowingly leave those risks unaddressed for three whole years. The best time to implement these reforms was in 2022 when the Ombudsman first sounded the alarm, and the second-best time was last month. Labor failed to act both times, and it has resulted in devastating, devastating consequences.

One of far too many examples we have learned of recently is predator Ronald Marks in Horsham, who was convicted of accessing child abuse material and yet continued to take part in council-run activities involving children. Despite his arrest, his working with children check remained valid for years. This is broken and needs urgency in addressing this. When his card was eventually ruled invalid, he was still able to work alongside children – still able to work alongside our children. This is not an administrative slip, it is a complete breakdown of the safeguards meant to keep our children safe. We know it.

But he is not the only one. In another disturbing case that we learned of this morning, a Victorian childcare worker deemed such a serious risk – he is blacklisted – was still allowed to hold a valid working with children check for years afterwards. He still has it, and we heard the silence, the 10 seconds of silence from the Premier who had no idea.

A member: Disgraceful.

Annabelle CLEELAND: That is disgraceful. I hope that those members that objected to our bill last sitting stay awake at night thinking of this.

The system knew he was unsafe, but the card that gave him access to children stays valid. If those failures are not alarming enough, it was also revealed that the state government's own Service Victoria app continues to have glaring security flaws. In as little as 30 seconds individuals can infiltrate another person's working with children check to present it as their own, opening the door for dangerous individuals to work alongside kids.

In recent months, everyone across our state has seen just how vulnerable our childcare sector is. Allegations of sexual abuse in Victorian childcare settings have rocked families and absolutely shattered the trust. Parents want to believe – and gosh they should, they deserve it – that when they drop their child off in the morning that they are safe. They want to believe that the system which screens staff and protects our youngest is watertight, but it is not, and Labor knows this. Every member on the opposite side, you know this. They have known it since 2022, but instead of acting, they have chosen a so-called rapid review, a rapid review that is three years too late. A review is not a protection; a review is not real reform; a review is a political tactic to buy time, to manage headlines and to avoid accountability. But let me be clear: every single Victorian deserves to know exactly who voted to keep this broken system in place, and the heartbreaking fact is that it was not some faceless bureaucrat. It was 54 Labor members of the Legislative Assembly, led by the Premier of Victoria, who each made a conscious decision to block these reforms.

I want to acknowledge the amazing work of the member for Kew Jess Wilson, who has acted swiftly and decisively to propose these reforms immediately – reforms that could have given parents across Victoria peace of mind that their children were safe. These effective and meaningful reforms were not the only thing that Labor ignored. We know they have form in this. They ignored the Ombudsman report from three years ago. Three years – so much has happened in that time that could have been avoided. They failed to act on clear and urgent warnings, and there are so many families whose future has been shattered because of that. They allowed dangerous gaps in the system to remain open for three years, and to continue to this day – to this minute – to remain open. When given the chance to close this gap, 54 members voted no, and the result we are left with is a system that still allows people under investigation for serious child-related offences to hold a working with children check.

This is a system where key risk factors are ignored because the law does not require them to be considered. It is a system where parents are expected to place trust in a process that has failed them again and again, and tomorrow it will fail them and every day after until the government decides to act. But we have given them the directive; we have given them the solution.

To every single Victorian parent: I want you to know that when the moment came to choose between safeguarding Victorian children and safeguarding themselves, Labor chose themselves. As a mother, I will not forget. As a mother, I find this choice absolutely beyond comprehension.

This government's failures do not end with screening checks. Access to child care remains a serious issue across the state, and it is critical to the wellbeing and safety of Victorian children. Right now families across Victoria, and in particular regional Victoria, are desperate for child care, and without access to safe, regulated child care parents are forced to make impossible choices: to give up work, to put their careers on hold or worse, to place their children in unregulated settings where there are no safeguards whatsoever. The government promised to fix it, but we are still waiting.

In August 2023 they proudly announced 50 new childcare facilities by 2028 – glossy press release, all the bells and whistles, smiley faces, big promises. By May last year, the timeline had quietly blown out to 2032, and as it stands, just four of these centres will open by the end of the year and 26 of the promised 50 have no timeline for completion at all. This is not delay; this is complete abandonment. The language has changed. These proposed centres represent 26 towns and suburbs where parents had pinned their hopes on improved childcare access; 26 communities where parents are trying to return to work, ease cost-of-living pressures and give their child the best possible start to life, only to be told to wait several years.

The government boasts about \$14 billion in early childhood education, but that is a mere promise that they are breaking rapidly. \$14 billion means nothing if the promises are broken and the facilities are never delivered. It means nothing if those facilities are not safe. And while access is part of the problem, enforcement and regulations keep us awake on this side of the house. Labor's own childcare regulator, the Department of Education's quality assessment and regulation division, is failing to do its job. Since 2016 the regulator has sanctioned 11 of G8 Education's 130 centres. Complaints continue to go up, but enforcement is absolutely down. And despite these failings, Labor's rapid review into childcare safety is deliberately designed to exclude the examination of the regulator's performance. It is failing. They will not even look at whether the watchdog is effective.

Victorians can see through this delay tactic, because this is not oversight, it is avoidance. Right now the regulator is a watchdog without teeth and Victorian families and Victorian children are paying the price. We owe Victorian children more than this. We owe Victorian parents more than this. As a mother I know we owe our communities the truth. This government had chance after chance, year after year to act, and it has chosen delay, distraction and political self-interest. The best time to fix this was three years ago. The second-best time to fix this was last month. The Allan Labor government chose neither. But let me tell you, Victorian families will not forget this. This is not good enough. Our children deserve a system that puts their safety before politics. Parents deserve a government that tells them the truth, not one that hides behind reviews or media. The safety of our children is not negotiable – not for me, not for the Liberals and Nationals and not for every parent in Victoria.

Regional Victoria

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (16:46): I rise today to grieve for regional Victoria should we ever have to suffer those on the other side in government and in particular should the Shadow Treasurer ever get his hands on the government purse. Those on the other side have a long history of demeaning regional folk and cutting their services. Those on the other side like to pretend that Jeff Kennett is ancient history, but I can tell you that we country folk have long memories and we will never forget being referred to as the toenails of Victoria. Those on the other side will hoot and holler that Jeff Kennett was 20 years ago, but their current Shadow Treasurer the member for Brighton openly echoes the sentiment. We are never going to forget that he called us out-of-towners, suggesting that our Premier, who is from regional Victoria, and our wonderful Treasurer, from regional Victoria, were in some way incapable of running the state because we were just from the regions. We will always remember Jeff Kennett's words, but we will also remember the Shadow Treasurer and his degrading words about regional Victoria and our capacity and capability.

Regional Victorians do not like to be talked down to, and I think that that really shows in the numbers. In this business of course it is all about the numbers – and let us just count those on the other side. Of the Liberal Party there are four members in the Legislative Assembly that are representing regional areas. On this side of the house there are 12 members of the Australian Labor Party and the Allan Labor government representing regional Victoria. I think regional Victorians have made it very clear what they think of the way that those on the other side speak about us. We know that we cannot trust them. But the member for Brighton's words are not just disparaging –

Richard Riordan: I am just bringing the Deputy Speaker's attention to the state of the house. It appears that the grievances today are even boring the members of government.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Unnecessary assistance, member for Polwarth.

Quorum formed.

Michaela SETTLE: What I want to say is that the member for Brighton's words are not just disparaging about regional Victoria, they are a frightening harbinger of what is to come if he ever gets his hands on the budget. In the *Age* in 2020 the member for Brighton invoked the legacy of Liberal hero Jeff Kennett, who as Premier presided over a massive program of privatisation. I quote the member for Brighton:

'The Liberal Party is the party of responsible economic management – the party of Jeff Kennett,' Mr Newbury told *The Age*.

'Successive governments have accepted that privatisation ultimately delivers better services and investment back into the community ...

Richard Riordan interjected.

Michaela SETTLE: No, we are talking about the member for Brighton here, and we are talking about him talking in 2020. This is 2020. Is that years ago? What the member for Brighton in 2020 said was:

If the Liberal Party doesn't believe that the private sector can deliver services more efficiently than the public sector, what do we believe in?

Well, I can assure the member for Brighton that many on this side often wake up and ask ourselves, 'What do they believe in?' It is certainly not clear. But the member for Brighton tells us that he believes in privatisation, and so the people in regional Victoria must ask ourselves: which hospital in regional Victoria will the member for Brighton seek to privatise? This Labor government had to bring back the Mildura hospital into the state system, but will the member for Brighton flog it off again? I have no doubt. Will he privatise the SEC? We all know how that went last time. While we are talking about energy, let us reflect on the Shadow Treasurer's record on vital renewable energy infrastructure in regional Victoria. The only time I have seen him in regional Victoria was when he palled up with his mate Gordon Rich-Phillips to stir up community dissent about a wind farm in my electorate. That is a wind farm that farmers rely on for income. That is a wind farm that regional people would get jobs to build and maintain. But in further disdain for regional folk, he ran a petition and hoodwinked people into signing, harvesting their personal details – we call it astroturfing in this game. But it gets even better. The petition called on people to reject our wonderful Minister for Energy and Resources because the member for Brighton said people in the city should not be making decisions for people in the regions. I do not know about you, but the last time I looked, Brighton was not considered a regional seat.

The Shadow Treasurer thinks that we are stupid in the regions, stupid enough to sign a petition on the member for Brighton's page calling for decisions that affect the regions not to be made by Melbourne ministers. But this is where it gets really confusing or, worse still, indicates his ability to speak from both sides of his mouth. On the one hand, he does not think that out-of-towners are capable of running the state, and on the other, he thinks Melbourne ministers cannot understand the regions. Is he looking for an entirely devolved state so that the regions run themselves and metro runs itself? That would be an interesting prospect when we hold 12 of the seats in the regions and they hold just four. Bring it on, I say. Bring it on.

And they do not just believe in privatisation. They believe in cutting vital services – frontline workers, like the nurses that look after us in our hour of need. They have made it very, very clear – not in the old Kennett days but currently, in this very session – that cuts are what they are going to come for. In January of just this year one of the fine members of the other place said:

If we are lucky enough to get elected in 2026, we're going to have ... debt to deal with. How do you deal with that within a practical way ...

We saw what Campbell Newman did in Queensland, he cut extremely, he probably had to, but he lasted for one term.

So I guess it's a really difficult balancing act of how much do you cut, what do you cut, what services can you live without what services can't (you).

So in January of this year those on the other side made it very, very clear that they are going to start cutting our services.

The Shadow Treasurer is in fact making a foray into the wilds of Ballarat very soon. It will come as no surprise that he is lunching with business leaders – with the bosses – because of course those on the other side are on their side, not the side of hardworking regional Victorians. I have a couple of tips for him before he heads up to Ballarat. My first suggestion is do not call them out-of-towners – try hard not to show the contempt that you hold for the regions because even those card-carrying Liberal members will not stand for that. Another tip is perhaps do not mention payroll tax – a policy of this government that introduced the lowest payroll tax in the country for regional Victorian businesses. They should be asking themselves if that is something he is going to cut straight away. Is that on the list that they are looking at for cuts? Or will it be train lines? His hero Kennett was well and truly into that, as we know.

Whilst those on the other side like to say it was a long time ago, I can assure them that people have not forgotten. They have not forgotten in Maryborough. They have not forgotten in Ararat. They have not forgotten what it was like to be completely stranded. The member for Polwarth will be delighted to know that the return of the trains is the very reason I joined the Victorian Labor Party. I saw Steve Bracks come to my town, which had been utterly decimated by those on the other side when they ripped out the train line. Steve Bracks came, restored those train lines, and you know what, people have never forgotten.

We only have to look to our wonderful colleague the member for Ripon. They know who is there to look after them. What has the member from Ripon achieved? Let me tell you. The full redevelopment of the Maryborough hospital; that is pretty extraordinary stuff. Can I just do a little comparison here. We are not going back to Kennett. We are going to the last Liberal government, the Napthine–Baillieu governments – another one of those tumultuous ones. How can you have two leaders in one term? It was pretty extraordinary. Let us have a look at what they did about hospitals and regional health in their term. Bendigo – good on them. Let us compare it to the Andrews and Allan Labor governments' hospital builds in the region: Ballarat base, Warrnambool base, Maryborough, Frankston, Barwon. We bought back Mildura. I think people in regional Victoria know who is looking after them. Some on the other side like to bring forth fake patients into their hospitals to try to suggest that there is more work going on, putting working people at risk by making them dress up as fake patients.

Members interjecting.

Michaela SETTLE: Do not talk to me, Mr Polwarth, about what happens in health in the region. As I say, they like to tell us that the Kennett years were a long time ago and the Napthine years were a long time ago. The member for Brighton, the current Shadow Treasurer, is already echoing all of those things that we know they have in their very DNA. They have absolute contempt for regional people. That is why they have to buddy up with the National Party, because no self-respecting regional person would vote for a Liberal. It is ancient history, the Kennett years, but it is a history that continues to run through their veins when the Shadow Treasurer refers to us as out-of-towners with absolute contempt. He might not want houses built in his leafy suburbs. But I tell you what, what is happening is those people are coming into our regions – into the gorgeous Bacchus Marsh – and we do welcome them. We do not mind what sort of sneakers they are wearing. We want them in our community, but we also want to be there and build the infrastructure for them.

I have got to thank my great colleague the member for Melton, because he is putting that hospital there that is going to service all of our community. I did not list it amongst the regional hospitals we have built –

Pauline Richards interjected.

Michaela SETTLE: We had so many – but it is going to serve regional people. The people in Bacchus Marsh and in Ballan will be able to access that wonderful hospital in Melton. While the member for Brighton does not want anyone in the wrong sneakers coming to live in his suburbs, we are busy making sure that we can provide the infrastructure for the people that really need it.

The Ballarat line upgrade has just been extraordinary. We have had upgraded stations in Ballan, Bacchus Marsh and Ballarat, and as I said, it might have been a long time ago, but we will never forget. You have to compare that to those on the other side, who just cut those stations. The Shadow Treasurer is absolutely hell-bent on privatisation, and he belongs to a party that do not know who they are. But the public do know who those people on the other side are. They know that they are the party of cuts and chaos. We have seen nothing more than chaos from those on the other side. Last time they were in government they were certainly wielding the razor. My good friend the member for Frankston often reminds me that they cut Free Fruit Friday.

Really, what happens when they get in is regional Victoria suffers. Those on the other side have nothing but contempt for regional Victoria, and we will stand together to make sure that the red wall is strong and that they do not come into the regions, because we value our frontline workers and we value the services that this government have provided in terms of health care, rail and infrastructure. Those on the other side are nothing more than chaos.

Middle East conflict

Tim READ (Brunswick) (17:01): More than 670 days into Israel's genocide in Gaza I am sad to say that the state of Victoria is still a willing and enthusiastic contributor to the connected Israeli, American and Australian military industries. This week the Albanese Labor government finally announced recognition of Palestine as a state, 14 months after a Greens motion calling for this in the federal Parliament – which, by the way, led to Senator Fatima Payman's departure from the Labor Party.

Recognition of Palestine is decades overdue, but recognition is not going to feed the starving children or stop the bombs; we need real action. Australians want sanctions on Israel and want an end to the arms trade, and this tiny step by the Albanese government only happened because hundreds of thousands of Australians have taken to the streets week after week to demand action. These protesters are the conscience of the nation, and they know that our federal and even our state government deal with Israel's military industries. They know these dealings are levers our governments can pull to influence Israel, and we want the government to pull those levers to end the forced starvation and to stop the bombing, the ongoing slaughter and maiming and the killing of journalists, including Anas al-Sharif and four colleagues on Sunday. With hundreds of thousands dead, wounded or missing in Gaza, almost all homes destroyed, most buildings destroyed or damaged and schools, hospitals and crop land destroyed or seriously damaged, this is genocide, and in the face of genocide, we are legally and morally bound to do everything we can to stop it.

Today I will outline some evidence indicating that, unfortunately, Victorian Labor is doing the opposite. According to Victoria's most recent economic growth statement, our state will spend \$240 million attracting new priority industries, with defence and advanced manufacturing at the top of the list. The Victorian government proudly advertises that when it comes to weapons, Victoria is open for business, as demonstrated by our state sponsoring both the Land Forces weapons exhibition and the Avalon airshow where, back in March, Premier Allan met with some of the biggest names in war, including the heads of Thales, Hanwha, Boeing, BAE and Marand. Premier Allan even met with Lockheed Martin's president of missiles and fire control Tim Cahill, despite Lockheed Martin continuing to supply missiles for Israel's Apache helicopters.

Victoria's love affair with the Israeli war machine has precedent. In 2017 Premier Andrews opened an Invest Victoria office in Tel Aviv, and five years later Andrews signed a memorandum of

understanding with Israel's Ministry of Defense. We were pleased to learn in late 2024, after a great deal of protest and even a debate here in Parliament initiated by the Greens, that Labor under Jacinta Allan would not renew the MOU. That was a welcome decision and clearly demonstrated what we already knew: pressure works. But it was only the first and smallest divestment from Israel's genocide that we need to see in Victoria, because Labor continues to deliver that political support. Even in May 2025, over a year into Israel's invasion of Gaza, Premier Allan toasted Israel at a private birthday event. That would be like Anthony Albanese toasting Russia as Putin attacks Ukraine. Curiously, in 2024 she declined to do so, and oddly, the Premier was not present at any events commemorating the first Nakba, or the catastrophe, as Palestinians refer to the beginning of their colonisation.

When we talk about Victoria helping arm Israel, there are two main villains: investments in Israeli weapons company Elbit Systems and the manufacturing and export of key parts for F-35 fighter jets. We know that Elbit makes the drones, weapons and tanks that help Israel slaughter hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, yet down in Port Melbourne, Elbit is still operating a research centre thanks to an old contract from the Andrews Labor government. Out in Geelong Elbit is helping Hanwha make tanks for the Australian Army thanks to a \$900 million contract from the Albanese Labor government signed off last year months into the genocide. We also know Israel uses Lockheed Martin's F-35 fighter jets to attack Palestinians as well as other countries across the Middle East. Lockheed Martin requires a complex supply chain for the F-35 which involves more than 75 Australian companies. Here in Victoria that includes some of the big names like BAE Systems and Boeing, but it also involves local manufacturers like Marand in Moorabbin which makes F-35 parts. There are also castings made in Dandenong by AW Bell and precision gears from flight specialists Ronson Gears in Highett. Thanks to *Declassified Australia*, we know that Australia not only exports F-35 parts, but we are still sending them directly to Israel as recently as July this year.

Labor's support for the war machine does not stop at Elbit Systems or F-35s. In March this year the Albanese Labor government bragged that it had grown Australia's supply chain program for weapons companies to over \$2 billion. The media release from the Minister for Defence Industry Pat Conroy boasted that under Labor the global supply chain program has almost doubled from seven to 13 defence primes, meaning major companies on long-term contracts with the federal Department of Defence. Mr Conroy either did not know or did not care, but several of those so-called primes are directly arming Israel's genocide. The UN has specifically warned governments not to do business with five of them: BAE Systems, Boeing, Rheinmetall, Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin. But there goes Labor anyway, not even hiding it, but in fact publishing media releases to crow about their business acumen. It is one thing for Australia to have its own military and to make weapons for the defence of Australia, it gets complicated when we allow multinational companies to do that while they are also making weapons for countries that may use them in ways we do not entirely approve of. But it is another thing altogether when we know that those companies are supplying weapons to a country that is actively carrying out genocide. It is not only seeing someone set a fire and declining to reach for the fire extinguisher, but it is also actively giving them lighter fluid.

Thanks to the diligent work of activists and investigators we know it is not only defence and weapons companies in Victoria and around Australia that are the problem, but other private companies and institutions are also directly profiting from Israel's ethnic cleansing in Palestine. Even now Australia's Future Fund and Australian Super all invest in weapons companies like Elbit Systems, and those shares have gone up in value since the invasion of Gaza in a damning illustration of the perverse incentives of our economic system. Another super fund HESTA is investing in banks and other companies supporting illegal Israeli settlements.

Last Thursday thousands of brave university students across Australia went on strike demanding sanctions on Israel, including here in Melbourne at the University of Melbourne, RMIT, Deakin, Swinburne, Monash and Latrobe. These students demanded action from their governments but also their universities which are increasingly accepting blood money. Until recently, RMIT even partnered with Elbit Systems, that same Israeli weapons company that we mentioned earlier. Students and staff

successfully pressured RMIT to divest from Elbit and are now targeting dozens of other defence partners.

To hear the way this government talks about anti-genocide protesters, you would think that it is not the mass murder that is the problem, but the act of publicly objecting to it. The Premier herself recently brought a motion to this Parliament that sought to portray those who protested the genocide in Palestine as antisemitic when they rallied outside the National Gallery of Victoria in July. It brought to mind the Vietnam War, when anti-war protesters were branded Viet Cong sympathisers and they, along with those protesting nuclear weapons, were called communists. When you make a stand against a narrative built to defend the powerful, you should expect to be cast as a wrongdoer, even if you are standing against a genocide, but Parliament does not have to join in.

I have been to many protests against Israel's actions in Gaza and the West Bank, and I am sure the crowd outside the NGV were not motivated by antisemitism. They did not get out of bed that morning saying, 'We're going to be antisemitic.' They were motivated by pictures of emaciated children in Gaza, where Israel is blocking food trucks. That is a war crime. People are watching this happen and are rightly horrified. They feel powerless, and peaceful protest is one of the only things they can do to try and stop it.

It reflects poorly on members of this place if we misrepresent the motives of protesters. By all means disagree with them, but misrepresenting them can only worsen the situation. This government has repeatedly sought to portray peaceful protest as outside the bounds of acceptable behaviour, but if we cannot protest outside the NGV and we cannot hold up signs in Parliament and we cannot march down Swanston Street or walk to the King Street Bridge, then how can we protest a genocide?

Ohad Kozminsky of the Jewish Council of Australia spoke about the conflation of political protest and antisemitism, stating:

Such language inaccurately conflates Jewishness with support for Israel, and undermines the fight against real antisemitism. This narrative is inaccurate and dangerously misleading. It is fuelling moral panic and justifying repressive and unnecessary police powers that will do nothing to combat the real problem of antisemitism, anti-Palestinian racism and other forms of racism.

There is no Jewish safety in a society where criticism of militarism is banned, protest is criminalised, and war crimes are excused.

In the case of the NGV, people were protesting not because the Gandels are Jewish but because of the Gandel Foundation's role as prominent supporters of Israel's actions and because John Gandel has publicly defended Israel's assault on Gaza, saying they had to go 'all out'. That is a political position, and people have every right to peacefully protest that. What every level of government should be doing right now is cutting ties with Israel to stop them from bombing and starving people. Instead of harnessing their very real power to reduce the flow of weapons and withhold political funding and financial backing from the Israeli government, Labor is demonising protest, whether it is on the streets, outside weapons companies or even holding up a sign in Parliament.

When we say Labor needs to shut all of this down by sanctioning Israel, ending the two-way arms trade and expelling the ambassador, it is not just a request, it is international law. Australia is a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty. Article 6 of the Arms Trade Treaty prohibits transfers of weapons if the state party has:

... knowledge at the time of authorization that the arms or items would be used in the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, attacks directed against civilian objects or civilians protected as such...

We have seen all of that in Gaza, and that also means supplying components to weapons that facilitate genocidal acts, and it may result in legal liability for both states and corporations.

For all of the reasons I have outlined here today Victoria cannot claim that this is only a federal issue. Our state is a key player in the supply chain that culminates in a bomb dropping on a tent of refugees

in Gaza. But instead of doing something – anything – that really could make a difference, Labor makes symbolic calls for a ceasefire in public, toasts Israel in private, condemns protesters and does very little in terms of real, concrete actions to pressure Israel to finally put an end to its genocide. So I grieve today for the horrors that our government is forcing us to support against our will. I grieve for Victorians who want peace while their government does all it can to grow the Western war machine. And I grieve for the millions of people in Gaza who are paying the price.

Opposition performance

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (17:14): I grieve today for the future of young people in Victoria if the member for Brighton is in charge of the Treasury.

But I do just want to make an exception now, because it would be remiss of me not to touch on a couple of things that the member opposite just spoke about. The first would be an optic that somehow the protests that we are seeing now are like the protests that Australia saw during the Vietnam War, where 550 Australians lost their lives fighting overseas in a different country. That is a very, very different concept to what we are seeing now. We could have a discussion about that – a very reasonable discussion about that, I think – and we might disagree, but I think that is a very long bow.

The second question I would love to know the answer to is how many Gandels were put out by that protest the other day? When protesting about the Gandels and them supporting the NGV, how many Gandels were put out by that protest? What message did that send – or did it just scare children and put out a lot of families who were taking their kids to the gallery? What was achieved, that is what I want to know. I say that respectfully. I believe in the right to protest, but I am a little bit tired of sitting here and almost being blamed for not taking action about what is happening in Gaza. It is a rhetoric that continues in this place, and I think it is damaging. I do not think people in this house should have to put up with that. I digress.

The opposition have somehow managed to stand in between me and you, Deputy Speaker. They have managed to conjure up \$8 billion worth of a black hole. Somehow this has gone under the radar for a lot of people, but there is no way in the world that they have a plan to pay for this \$8 billion black hole. We know cuts are in the DNA of the Liberals, those economic illusionists that bring us this black hole. God help us if they win power and the Liberals get their hands on the levers of power again, because we will, as sure as sunrise, see cuts to Victorians all over again. I, and I think most people on this side of the house, believe that Victorians deserve leaders who know how to balance a budget. They deserve leaders that do not cut the heart out of a state and do not cut the services that make our state so livable. We also deserve, in my opinion, leaders who celebrate our successes, who acknowledge our strengths and who do not walk into this place every day shouting Victoria down, who do not grab the megaphone and say, ‘Victoria is failing’.

In the Shadow Treasurer’s budget reply we heard we were ‘the run-down state’, and that is a dubiously uneducated statement at best and vexatious at worst. What an absolute mistruth. Victoria’s economy is growing, and according to CommSec’s *State of the States* report the biggest annual growth rate in the nation belongs to Victoria. Further to that, we have jumped from seventh place to third of all the states in a sign of improvement in our underlying economic activity, and proof that the plan – the five point plan that we put in place – is actually working. On top of that, the labour market is up, employment is up, retail spending is up, Victoria’s population is growing, we lead the nation in construction work completed and, in the latest NAB business survey, Victorian business conditions are 8 points up and Victorian business confidence is 6 points up. To have the opposition, whether it is the Shadow Treasurer or other minions, coming in here peddling these mistruths, as I said, is uneducated at best but vexatious at worst. It is an optic that I think is incredibly damaging, because what it is saying is, ‘You should not have confidence in this economy. You should not have confidence in Victorians to get the jobs done.’

Most alarmingly, though, in that budget reply speech the Shadow Treasurer came out and said that they were going to cut five taxes. He did not come clean exactly on how they would cut these five

taxes, but when you do the maths – when you get the calculator out and you hit the reality button – that creates an \$8 billion deficit, which must be filled somehow. We cannot get the Shadow Treasurer to tell us how he is going to do that. He is as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs with that one – he will not tell us how he is actually going to fill that hole. They keep on coming in here and saying, ‘We’ve done the sums. We know.’ Well, I would love to see those sums. I would love to see the crayons that is written with, because there is no way you can take \$8 billion worth of taxes and fill that spot without actually making cuts. We know the real question is what are they cutting, because at the moment it feels like the Liberal dad has said to his family, ‘We’re going to go on a cruise. We’re going to have a great holiday.’ But he has forgotten that he does not actually own a boat, he has not got a passport, he has not got a ticket and he has not got any money – that is where they are leading us. This is not just an obscure mistake; it is not anything but dodgy maths. This is also about a consistent pattern from the opposition that we have seen time and time again. They dream up these multibillion-dollar schemes without any funding plan, à la ‘We’re going to cut five taxes and we will review 61 taxes further to that,’ because that is what they said. They hope nobody asks the hard questions, and when they do, they just blame the government.

This \$8 billion black hole – you cannot find anywhere in their media releases how they are going to balance this budget after cutting those taxes. This is not loose change; you do not find this down the couch cushion – this is \$8 billion. You do not need an economist to find this black hole, you need a miner – it is that big. That \$8 billion would pay for every teacher’s pay in Victoria for a year. It would also pay for every nurse’s pay for a year, and then we would still have enough left over to pay for the entire ambulance service for a year. That is how much \$8 billion is. When you talk about that \$8 billion hole and when you come out and you say, ‘We’re going to cut five taxes, and on top of that we’re going to review 65 more,’ what you are really saying and what you are effectively announcing to Victorians is that you are going to cut services that they need. ‘We are going to cut services’ is what they are saying. There is no such thing as an accounting error or a rounding error this big.

I think the opposition’s economic strategy in a nutshell is hope. They hope that people do not look into this. They hope that people do not have a calculator. They hope people do not find out the truth. Past performance is the best indicator of future performance – we know that. Under the previous Liberal government of Victoria, or previous governments, we know they cut \$1 billion from the health system and they went to war with nurses and paramedics. They cut more than \$1 billion from our education system and left our kids and our teachers behind. They made the biggest cuts to TAFE in Victoria’s history, sacking staff and shutting campuses in the middle of a jobs crisis. They cut \$130 million from Victoria Police and \$66 million from fire services. They also cut first home buyer grants and made it harder for young people to get into their first home. If they won government, they would have to cut all those things again and more to fill that \$8 billion budget deficit – as well as that 65 taxes review. That is another statement that seems to have slipped past the wicketkeeper. What they are really saying is, ‘Who do we cut and what do we cut first?’ That is the question I ask people in the chamber today. Is it nurses, who care for our loved ones – are they the ones who are cut? Is it teachers that shape our children’s futures, who shape our future, who shape our future leaders – are they copping the cuts? Is it the workers who keep our communities safe – are they getting cut?

We do know also that those opposite have said that they will abolish the SEC. They have actually said, ‘The SEC is gone if we win.’ The SEC, the State Electricity Commission reboot, drives down power bills and is building publicly owned renewable energy for Victorians. Previously it was sold off by the Liberals in 1990, but we are bringing it back, and that means jobs and it means cheaper power. They are going to cut it. We know that the Suburban Rail Loop, a traffic congestion cutting transformative project to our public transport system, will deliver more transport, more homes and more jobs. We have already got it on the record that the Liberals will be cutting this congestion-busting project. If they are in charge, it will be the Shadow Treasurer who actually does it. That means jobs gone and huge projects gone from our pipeline of projects.

I think this is consistent with what we know, though. Those of us who have been around for a little while know that there were these pipedream kinds of commitments to 55 intersections to be taken away during, I think, the 2018 election. I am not sure where that came from; I am not sure how it made sense. No-one voted for it. It disappeared very quickly. We had nuclear, which was a laughing matter in this chamber for some time until the former federal leader came out and said, 'It is reality; we will be spending money on nuclear energy, and this is where it's going to go – \$60 billion worth.' It does not add up, but economically that is what they said they were going to do. We should be worried.

The opposition like to say that they are fiscally responsible, but it is a little bit like saying a child is fiscally responsible or financially prudent because they have got a credit card that they have not maxed out yet. This \$8 billion is not a rounding error, and it reminds me of a mate I used to have who had an old HR Holden. It had an engine light that used to come on all the time. It might have been low on oil or it might have been low on coolant – it was probably the first car that came out with an engine warning light, frankly – but he used to stick a piece of gaffer tape over that and say, 'Can't see it; it's not happening.'

That car overheated a ton of times and it still kept on going. It was amazing. But that is the equivalent of what the Liberals are doing here. They are saying, 'We'll cover this up. We'll cover the "check engine" light up. It doesn't matter.'

Victorians do not need cheerleaders for decline, and that is what the opposition have become. Victoria's need leaders who build, who invest, who grow the economy. Cutting the services that families rely on is not something you will see this government do. That is exactly what will be proposed across the aisle because they have to make up \$8 billion. They have promised those tax cuts. Where are they coming from? It will be from cutting services that our community relies on.

We build record infrastructure, we build record jobs; we invest at a record level in Victoria. Meanwhile it seems like those opposite are stuck in a permanent press conference. Talking Victoria down is not harmless. It corrodes confidence, it scares off investors, it undermines the hard work of those people who work in our community sector – the teachers, the nurses, the ambos, the police – and it is a really cynical kind of tactic. I do not think it is leadership. It is more a kind of sabotage, and it is akin to what those opposite are used to at the moment. Our role is the opposite. We back Victoria, we invest in Victoria. We talk up our people, because they deserve it. They cut, they cancel, they complain; we build, we hire and we grow. That is the choice, that is the contrast, that is the truth that will be presented to people in an election next year.

We can already assume that those opposite hate public services, they hate working from home and they hate housing for young people. If you are a young person trying to buy a house, if you are a young person and working from home works for you or if you are a busy mum or dad who relies on public schools and a strong public health system, we are on your side. Under the Liberals you are on your own. We know from past performance that cuts are in their DNA, and it is an economic illusion to say that they are going to cut those taxes and create an \$8 billion black hole.

I have seen it personally. I grew up in Churchill and Morwell. I grew up in the days when the SEC was privatised. I grew up and saw my town die off overnight, and it is still building now to its potential with the investment from this government. I have seen what the Liberals do to communities, and we cannot afford to have that happen. This \$8 billion black hole plus the review of the other 65 taxes is absolutely alarming. It would not be so alarming if there was some meat on the bone, but I have seen more meat on a butcher's pencil. There is no detail to this. We should be alarmed about what comes first – is it teachers, is it nurses, is it public sector workers – because they have got to pay for this promise somehow. They should have got the calculator out. They should have got an economist. They should have got someone with an abacus even to show them what this would do. It does not add up, and it stinks. I think we are heading down a very, very dark road if this happens. The Shadow Treasurer is taking us into a place where our community do not know the facts and cannot see the truth. They

hear something that sounds great, but when they ask that second question of ‘How are you going to do that?’ they get no detail. I grieve for people in Victoria if this comes to pass.

Early childhood education and care

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (17:29): I rise to grieve for the children of Victoria because the Labor government has failed to keep them safe in child care. An investigation by the ABC revealed today that a Victorian childcare worker who was sacked five years ago for alleged sexual misconduct and allegedly kissing and grooming toddlers and was later banned from the industry still holds his working with children check to this day.

In 2020 Goodstart Early Learning sacked a male educator after an internal investigation found he was grooming and kissing toddlers. Goodstart’s internal investigation substantiated allegations that he only changed the nappies of little girls and referred to certain children as ‘his girls’.

It found that he bought gifts for certain children and asked parents to send photos of their children to his work email. He was alleged to have contacted parents to arrange unsanctioned catch-ups, and he even offered private babysitting services to these parents. The internal investigation concluded that the worker’s overall credibility and honesty was close to zero, that he presented an unacceptable risk to children and that he should cease employment with Goodstart – and they fired the man. This man’s working with children check was referred for review, but despite these findings, his working with children check was not revoked. His former employer who made the report was never notified of the review’s outcome. This man continued working in other childcare centres after being sacked and then had another complaint against him. In 2024 a prohibition order was issued banning him from working in the childcare industry, yet his working with children check remained active. And we found out today from the government that it is still valid, it is still active. This man, who groomed and kissed toddlers, asked for photos of kids from their parents, offered private babysitting services to parents and has alleged sexual misconduct, is permitted for all intents and purposes under this government to still be able to work with and have access to children. This is a failure beyond words. This scandal reveals what we are seeing time and time again, that Victoria’s working with children laws and systems under this government are failing children. That is why we grieve for the children of Victoria, because the Labor government has failed to keep them safe.

Time and again the Premier points to her review like it is this silver bullet that is going to solve everything. Any time there is a question asked – ‘Look at the review.’ Any time someone says she knew about it, there were warnings, there were things that were put to her regulator – ‘There’s a review coming. There’s a review coming. There’s a review coming.’ Well, I put to Victorians this: that there already have been recommendations that the Allan Labor government should have acted upon. The Ombudsman warned the government in 2022 that Victoria’s working with children screening process was one of the worst and weakest in the nation. Again in 2022 the commissioner for children and young people warned the government that without more funding for the agency investigating inappropriate behaviour in childcare, otherwise known as the reportable conduct scheme – and I quote from the report – ‘children will be abused, or continue to be abused’. I will say that again: the commissioner warned in 2022, three years ago, that ‘children will be abused, or continue to be abused’ by people who should have been stopped from working with children.

Both the Ombudsman and the commissioner for young people and children handed down these recommendations to close the loopholes, to fix the funding and to address these issues, yet three years later not one – not one! – of these recommendations has been acted on. My question is this: why do we need another review when we already have recommendations, when we have a litany of recommendations from the Ombudsman and a litany of recommendations from the commissioner for young people and children, who has warned the government for three years that children are not safe in our childcare centres? I ask the question: why is a review necessary when we have recommendations, when we should have acted, when we should have done something already? This

is bureaucracy at its finest. Only the Allan Labor government could dream this up, to add another layer of bureaucracy whilst Victorian children are left unprotected in child care.

As soon as the details of the alleged paedophile Joshua Brown came to light, the coalition, we on this side of the house, offered to act constructively with the government to recall Parliament, to act together to urgently pass these recommendations and urgently act upon these things that had already been put to the government. Yet the government refused. Worst of all is that the person that is leading the review is former Labor Premier Jay Weatherill, who oversaw the worst child protection failure in his state's history, in South Australia. This is who our Premier handpicked to lead Victoria's review into the childcare crisis.

We joke about the fact that Labor has jobs for mates, but this is no joke. This is again, as I said, bureaucracy at its finest, to have this sham review, but then not only to have a sham review but to have it led by the very Premier who was forced to apologise and who faced calls to resign after a damning Child Protection Systems Royal Commission in South Australia. This is Jay Weatherill. This is the person that the Premier arranged. A Labor Premier arranged for another former Labor Premier – talk about jobs for mates – to oversee this childcare inquiry, which is not even necessary because we have recommendations. He oversaw and was in charge during South Australia's biggest child protection scandal in history. As Premier, his government ignored warnings that led to a crisis where he faced calls to resign and was forced to apologise following a damning royal commission into this child protection system in disarray in South Australia. This is who the Premier chose to lead this review.

So here we are. It is a sham review. Instead of adopting recommendations we already have, they decided to do a review into a review that does not even capture the regulator whose job it is to look after the childcare system. Then we have it led by a former Labor Premier who oversaw the worst child protection crisis in history in South Australia. Then when the coalition introduced a bill to simply enact the recommendations that have already been made to Parliament, the Allan Labor government voted against it. We grieve. We grieve for the children of Victoria because the Labor government has failed to keep them safe in child care.

Under current laws, working with children checks are suspended if someone is charged with child sex offences but not while they are under investigation. Imagine being a mum of a five-month-old. We have been there. The member for Kew has been there. The member for Euroa has been there. My baby is now seven months. I have been there. Many of us in this place have been there. Imagine taking yourself back to that time when your baby was without agency, was without a voice and was maybe only just learning to roll. You have not even started solids yet. Imagine being at that place. You are a mum of a five-month-old or a dad of a five-month-old, and you have put your new baby in child care because you are just trying to make ends meet. Then you watch the news to hear that there has been an alleged paedophile that has been sexually abusing babies five months old to three years old. Like, imagine hearing that. I remember being in my home when that news broke and reading that in utter shock and dismay, because my baby was five months old at that time, and not even being able to fathom that atrocity against a child. Then you watch on and find out they do not know all the centres, so you are scrambling to find out. Was it at your centre? Was my child one of the victims? They are five months old. They cannot speak. They cannot tell me. I do not know. Imagine the panic and fear that would course through your system as a parent. Then imagine going to the doctor and having to test your baby – your five-month-old – for an STI, a sexually transmitted infection.

That is the story of 2000 families in Victoria. That is the story that we are here to tell today because of the government's inaction and because of the alleged paedophile Joshua Brown, this alleged paedophile with 70 offences of child sexual abuse who had two substantiated misconduct reports, including aggressively handling children in 2023 and again in January 2024, yet kept his valid working with children check and worked at 10 more centres across Victoria. His misconduct was reported to the police. It was reported to the regulator. Yet he still held a valid working with children check and was still permitted to work in childcare centres because of the loopholes in Victoria's system that the government had been warned about.

A friend of mine is from one of the families affected. Her niece had to be tested for an STI. Her niece, a new baby, had to be tested for a sexually transmitted infection. She is a new mum herself and was just about to re-enter the workforce with her baby at nine months of age, but she has since quit her job and given up her career as a teacher in my electorate. She said to me, ‘Nicole, I would rather our family be poor than my baby be unsafe.’ These are the responses from people in our community who have watched on as the government has failed them, so we grieve today for these Victorian families.

Imagine being a mum in Horsham who finds out that there has been a man playing with your kids in their childcare centre – there have been photos in the media of this – who was arrested four years ago by police for accessing child abuse material. He is there in your baby’s childcare centre because his working with children check was never revoked, never reviewed. Despite accessing child pornography, he has continued to work with and interact with children for four more years. He has had access to play with children and teach children for another four years under this government’s watch. This man, Ron Marks, has been charged with child sex offences.

The government was told by the Ombudsman and by the commissioner for children and young people that offenders would slip through the cracks. They were told that kids would be kept at risk. They were told that working with children checks needed to be reviewed without having to wait for conviction. They were told this and yet they did not act. That is why on this side of the house we move to close these loopholes. That is why the coalition has introduced proposed laws into Parliament to act on the recommendations from 2022. That is why on this side of the house we have three young mums in their 30s speaking here today, grieving for Victorian families, grieving for the 2000 families that had to test their babies for STIs and grieving for Victorian families like their own because Labor has failed to keep their children safe in child care.

We are here voicing the concerns of every young parent that has reached out to our offices to say, ‘Why didn’t they act? If they knew, why didn’t they act? If they knew, why didn’t they change things three years ago?’ They have asked us why, when the coalition constructively offered to work with the government, when the coalition introduced a bill to Parliament to say adopt the recommendations that have already been passed to Parliament, when we sought to close the loopholes that are keeping paedophiles in childcare centres – because there are people in there who have not yet been convicted but are being investigated. When we sought to close that loophole, the Allan Labor government voted against it. They would not debate it. They would not even talk to us about it. That is why we implored the government to recall Parliament. That is why we offered to work together. That is why we introduced legislation. We grieve for the children of Victoria because the Allan Labor government has failed to keep children safe in child care.

Opposition performance

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (17:44): We grieve for the future of young people in Victoria if the member for Brighton is ever in charge. Not only does he oppose work from home, he does not want young people to have a home to begin with. He is a blocker. He is about blocking homes and blocking opportunities, and I have got plenty of examples to show that, especially opportunities for young Victorians. He would deny young Victorians the same opportunities their parents had – the opportunity to live where they want and the opportunity to have access to the things they need to lead happy, healthy and prosperous lives.

It is really perplexing that this is subject to where people want to live, because that is fundamentally important, and that is what we are all about on this side. I do not know why the Liberals, and specifically here we are speaking to the member for Brighton, would not want children, when they grow up, to be able to live close to their parents so they can catch up regularly. If they are having to move hours away, that would be really sad, unless they are wanting to live elsewhere – the dynamics of the family is a whole other issue. But assuming families want to be connected and to stay connected throughout their lives, giving young people the opportunity to live where they need, with the transport

and access to jobs and other things which will help them live high-quality lives that are fulfilling – I would have thought the Libs would have been on to that.

But clearly the member for Brighton thinks otherwise, and unfortunately the Liberals are on a unity ticket here. They used to have one YIMBY, one lone voice, who spoke about increasing housing supply in the inner city and the middle suburbs near infrastructure. Mr Mulholland in the other place once said:

If my party wants to remain relevant to young people, we must at every opportunity reject this shortsighted and unfair approach and champion home ownership.

But he is not saying that anymore. And why is he not saying that anymore? Because the member for Brighton has won out. In 2017 the member for Brighton opposed a development in Hampton building 207 new apartments. In 2018 he campaigned to close down housing for rough sleepers in Brighton. You see there is a bit of a pattern here; he has form in this regard. This year he opposed 84 townhouses on a former Xavier College campus 350 metres from Brighton Beach station. That was 84 townhouses. You have to ask yourself, ‘Why would the member for Brighton be so vehemently opposed to townhouses and so close to Brighton Beach station?’

I have actually been to Brighton Beach station a number of times, when I was in the upper house. It is nice and close to the beach. Imagine young people being given the opportunity to have that accessibility to transport and live in townhouses. I do not know what his problem is. Nevertheless, it is persisting, and it is a real shame. It is a shame for Victorians more broadly as well. He also opposed activity centres in Brighton – I think he is almost infamous for this – stating:

... if we are fortunate enough to be elected, that ain’t going to happen.

So he wound up a frenzied mob to protest the announcement. I think that went viral, and unfortunately not for good reasons. For the member for Brighton I think it was decidedly embarrassing, to be perfectly frank. He said the announcement would:

... take a wrecking ball through our suburbs.

I wonder if he has a little regret about making such pretty blunt statements. Really it is about truncating. It is like putting a stake in the ground and saying, ‘Nup. Everyone up to this point – so me and people who are already existing and living in those inner suburbs – that’s fine. Everyone else, stuff you. We don’t care about you. We just care about the people up to this point. Everyone else’ – so by implication younger generations – ‘you’re stuffed. I don’t care.’ I am being frank, but that is the net effect. What looked like somebody purporting to champion the people in his suburb, when you follow the thread of the ramifications of that so-called championing of his suburb, the net effect is that it compromises the future of young Victorians, which is indeed very, very sad.

To demonstrate just how completely lacking in compassion for other Victorians he is, the member for Brighton also campaigned to close a facility that provided emergency housing for people who were rough sleeping, saying:

[QUOTE AWAITING VERIFICATION]

We have the right to preserve our way of life.

What does that actually mean – ‘preserve our way of life’? That is literally drawing a line in the sand and saying, ‘We’re okay.’ It is really just putting a line in the sand and saying, ‘Everyone else, well, fend for yourselves. Good luck.’ Not only did he want to close it, he wanted to do what Liberal governments do best: sell it off.

The Liberal and Nationals coalition’s attitude to social housing can be summed up by the former Liberal housing minister, who believed low-income families had no place in the member for

Brighton's district. I actually remember this vividly, because I was in the upper house in the time period of this statement:

There is no point putting a very low income, probably welfare-dependent family in the best street in Brighton where the children cannot mix with others or go to the school with other children or where they do not have the same ability to have the latest in sneakers and iPhones et cetera.

That is Wendy Lovell, *Hansard*, 23 March 2022.

I probably remember it because we were all pretty horrified on this side of the house. I know the specific area that she is talking about. Actually, that whole site has been rebuilt. The children from that site, many of them, went to Elsternwick Primary School. The net effect would have been that they would have mixed – I have got to be careful with those words – talked to and played with kids in Brighton who were not necessarily at that public housing site. Somehow it worked for many, many years, from whenever that site was built – let us say, the 1950s and 60s. Anyway, our Labor government has rebuilt that site, and guess what – I was just talking to a teacher from Elsternwick Primary School today – they now have kids from the new site who are going to Elsternwick Primary School. Inclusion – oh, my goodness. Who knew? So it has worked out – fancy that!

But we can see that those opposite are not sure about it. I think it comes back to something I said a little bit earlier, if I can requote – and I have to find that quote about taking a wrecking ball to our suburbs. No, there was something else, something more precise:

[QUOTE AWAITING VERIFICATION]

We have the right to preserve our way of life.

But what does that actually mean? That means we draw a line between those who have and those who do not have, so to speak. I think that is what that means, and that is definitely the very opposite of inclusion. But we can see that young Victorian children, guess what, are all over it. They just make friends. They just get on with it.

Tim Richardson: It's easy.

Nina TAYLOR: They do. It is easy. Who knew? That is something that those opposite, and particularly the member for Brighton, might want to take on board.

But there are plenty more examples of how those opposite block and oppose more housing. They have form – my goodness, do they have form. I am going to unpack it. The member for Sandringham opposed a proposal to build 1048 homes in Highett in 2021. David Davis attended a rally in 2021 protesting the development of 178 public and affordable homes at the Markham estate.

Tim Richardson interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: There is more. It does not stop there. You see, there is a pattern. It keeps on giving. It is evidence.

Let us not forget that in 2021 the former Leader of the Opposition – let us be really clear about that; it gets a bit confusing because there are a few. The most recent former Leader of the Opposition climbed up on the back of a ute in Hawthorn to oppose a social housing project at Bills Street. It is shameful. While John Pesutto tried to block these 200 homes in Bills Street, we got on and built them. And the new residents of Bills Street live in those homes because, despite the Liberals' attempt to block them, this government got on and built them.

Tim Richardson interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: Exactly right. We want to see Victorians housed, but we do not just talk about it, we actually deliver, because we believe we are accountable. That is why we are delivering.

The last time the Liberals were in government every single budget delivered significant cuts to housing assistance, social housing and support for disadvantaged Victorians to access the rental market, which would seem to be quite counterproductive when it comes to actually seeing all Victorians housed.

A total of \$348.8 million was cut from social housing funding in the Liberals' 2011–12 budget alone. That is a pretty large figure in anyone's language. That is a lot of money, and that would really have hurt.

On this side, though, we are not blockers; we are builders. We are building social and affordable housing, and we are delivering more townhouses and apartments where young people want to live near train stations. It is really about opening doors for young people. I know myself even having younger staffers in my office as well, they are not all actually hurtling out necessarily to get a drivers licence either. A lot of them are very focused on the climate but also on saving money and thinking about not being caught in congestion et cetera, so a lot of them are very mindful about using public transport – they are pretty passionate about that – and I think that reflects really well on them. So why do we not reward younger generations for their thoughtfulness – and it is actually pragmatism, isn't it, at the end of the day? It is a choice. Let me say, when it comes to our housing statement, we are very conscious, and there certainly has been a strong emphasis and prioritisation, about people being able to choose where they want to live and how they want to live. If somebody wants acres of land, so be it, fantastic, that is great if they can afford it – yes, that is the other side of the equation. On the other hand, there are the others who are deliberately choosing to have smaller gardens so that they have more free time to do other things. I think that is fair enough too when you think of all the beautiful parks and gardens we have in Victoria, the arts, bike paths, major events capital – there is always something going on, isn't there? That goes without saying.

This is about choice for people but particularly for young people, because we really do have to think of them. I think it is a great pity that the member for Brighton has just made a decision and said, 'Well, look, we're okay, Jack, but you don't matter. Younger generations, you just kind of work it out, wing it somehow. Good luck. Off you go.' I think it is pretty harsh and it is a real shame. But thankfully, he is not in charge, and we are getting on and we are building housing. Actually we are number one for approving builds and number one for building.

A member interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes, thousands more than New South Wales, thousands more than Queensland, in spite of those opposites who perpetually try to distort the reality of what we are doing. But we are not stopping there. That does not mean we say, 'Oh, it's all okay.' We are absolutely committed to continuing to deliver on the promises that we have made. I know there is certainly social and affordable housing well underway in my electorate in Port Melbourne. I know that Mr Davis did pop down to try and see if he could mess it up early on, along with, I have to say, the Greens political party. They did the best they could to stymie it, everything you can imagine – pulling in people not necessarily from my electorate but from other electorates to do kind of stunts and things. But thankfully, we pushed on because we know it is the right thing to do. We really want to make sure that young Victorians – the cross-section – have quality, energy-efficient housing with good landscaping and amenity.

Question agreed to.

Bills

Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (17:59): As I said in my contribution before the grievance debate, this is another strong change that will further protect the community from the harm caused by repeat

high-harm offending. Subjecting people accused of this repeat offending to a more stringent bail test makes it more likely that they will be refused bail and instead be remanded. Finally, we have further changes to prohibit privately provided electronic monitoring as a condition of bail as well as consequential amendments to other acts as required.

Overall, these are strong changes that send a very strong message that this serious offending will not be tolerated. Again, I would like to thank all my constituents for raising community safety with me, because that concern and feedback are driving these changes. This bill is another example of responding to community concern about the prevalence of certain serious offending.

In closing, we have seen the government's commitment to community safety, introducing Australia's toughest bail laws to protect people in our community from the risk of serious crime, and that continues here today. We have also seen that commitment backed up with significant investment in the most recent budget – namely, the \$727 million to ramp up capacity in Victoria's prisons and youth justice centre, bringing more prison beds on line to deal with an increasing number of alleged offenders being denied bail. We will keep our focus on community safety and will continue to work to deliver the government's tough new bail laws to keep Victorians safe by putting our community safety above all.

As I said before, I have the privilege of representing one of the most multicultural, diverse communities. Many of my constituents that call the Clarinda electorate home would have escaped persecution, starvation and civil war in their old country, and coming to this wonderful state of Victoria is a second chance to build up their life, ideally with safety in mind, with the best education that can be offered and the most advanced medical infrastructure that we have in place. Therefore this amendment bill is very vital for my community, who again and again advocate to me, either at their door, at community events or at my mobile office. Just like you, Acting Speaker Hamer, I have been doing a lot with my mobile office, including at train stations. We listen to the concerns of our community, to the concerns of our constituents, and acknowledge that community safety is one of those that comes back to us every now and then. Here today I commend the effort of the Attorney-General for bringing this bill forward, and I commend this bill to the house.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (18:03): I rise to speak on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025. The Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 does not go far enough. We have been here too many times now to try to get this right, and it really is not that hard. Hence I support the member for Malvern and his reasoned amendment to make this bill stronger by urgently providing Victoria Police and Corrections Victoria with all the resources necessary to implement this bill without further delay and to adopt the Liberal–National parties' 'break bail, face jail' policy to ensure that Victorian bail laws do not continue to fail to protect community safety. That is what really needs to happen, and then we will have a proper amendment bill that actually strengthens the bail laws.

While the government claims to strengthen our bail laws, this still falls short of what is necessary to protect our communities from repeat violent offenders and remains watered down from the 2014 standard which we had when we were in government, because we had strong bail laws, which this government has weakened. Premier Jacinta Allan has declared that community will always come first and that these reforms will make Victoria's bail laws the toughest in the country, but let us be honest, if these were truly tough, we would not be seeing the headlines day after day about individuals committing aggravated burglaries, carjackings or armed robbery whilst out on bail over and over again.

Aggravated crime continues to be a very pressing concern in regional Victoria, including in South-West Coast, not just in the Melbourne metropolitan area. This has rippled right across our state to the very edges, where we used to feel quite safe. The community has experienced elevated rates of violent and property-related offences, raising questions about public safety and the adequacy of the current law enforcement and judicial responses. Let us be clear: it is not the police's fault. They do an extraordinary job, and they are begging for the laws to be strengthened so that they can be effective in the roles that they are frustrated and burning out in.

In Portland the crime rate has surged over 20 per cent from 2023 to 2024 – that is a very short period of time and a very steep climb in the crime rates. Violent crimes including assault, robbery and stalking accounted for 132 incidences, or 13.18 victims per 1000 residents. Property crimes such as burglary, theft and arson – 447 cases. Now Portland is ranking in the bottom 17 per cent for safety among Victorian areas. That is a 1 in 76 chance of falling victim to a violent crime; that is appalling. Once again, I cannot support more confidently and more thankfully the work of the local police in Portland, who do an extraordinary job. They are burnt out. I talk to them frequently, and they are frustrated. They get taken from Portland to fill gaps – there are already enormous gaps. They cannot get out to areas like Heywood quickly enough because of the workload they have got and the gaps that exist. There are 1200 vacancies in the police force, so no wonder the police, who are trying their hardest to protect communities like Portland, are struggling.

Interestingly, the government have this law banning machetes, and they have just spent \$13 million to get 40 machete bins, these gold-lined bins – because that is what they must be. But no, there is not one in Portland, not one there, of course not. This government probably does not even know where South-West Coast is. They forget the importance of their responsibility to govern right from border to border, they are so Melbourne-centric.

In Warrnambool we have had an increase of crime also, with 2024 recording 2634 crimes, 345 violent crimes and 1169 property crimes. Assault and related offences accounted for 344 incidences. The odds of becoming a victim of a violent crime in Warrnambool are 1 in 91. If that was an incidence of getting cancer, you would be terrified. Well, you should be terrified now, because this is the incidence we have of violent crime. Again, the police in Warrnambool are wonderful. They are walking the streets and they are trying their hardest, but the residents are living in fear now. The retailers are living in fear. They cannot support their staff, they cannot feel safe to go to their cars after shifts and they cannot open their businesses and not have trouble out the front in the main areas of our CBD.

Now, this is interesting: breach of an order is the second most common offence, which is what breaking bail looks like – a breach of an order. That just demonstrates that this government has overseen a lack of respect for law and order now, because the police have not got the tools and the resources they need to put the law in place to keep people off the street.

I tell the story of a break-in in a shop in Portland. The shop owner said to me that the man was out, back hassling his shop, when they had not even finished boarding up the window. He was bailed and back out on the street quicker than he was able to board up the window that the guy had smashed.

In Terang, Koroit, Port Fairy and Heywood people do not feel safe in their homes anymore, and these are places we used to not lock our doors in. That is how I have always lived my life. I have never locked a house in my life. I did not even have a key to my home when I lived in Woolsthorpe. Not anymore – that is how rapidly things have changed in just a short five years, really.

While Warrnambool and Portland are rich in history and culture, the rise in aggravated crime threatens the sense of security that we as residents deserve. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated effort between local authorities, state government and community organisations to ensure that justice is not only served but felt.

These figures that I have read out underscore a growing need for stronger preventative measures, more visible policing and judicial reforms that prioritise community safety. But it is not possible. It is not possible because there are not enough police and the laws are not there to support them. It is not possible because 22,000 police shifts from around the state are being directed to Melbourne to deal with unregulated, dangerous protest activity, leaving regional communities unsafe and unprotected. As I said, there are 1200 vacancies in the police force, and they are burnt out.

The reality is that our current system continues to allow dangerous individuals back on our streets, often within hours of being charged – the example I just gave you of the retailer in Portland. Why should someone who has already demonstrated a disregard for the law be given another opportunity

to offend? The community deserves better than a system that gambles with our safety. Bail should be denied automatically for those charged with violent offences whilst on bail – no exceptions, no loopholes. Critics argue that tougher bail laws risk undermining the presumption of innocence. But let me ask: what about the presumption of safety for victims and the public? What about the rights of families who live in fear because known offenders are walking free? Justice must be balanced, and right now the scales are tipped in favour of the accused, not the community.

This bill also fails to address the growing concern around youth offenders. While recent amendments have removed the principle that remanding children should be the last resort, the bill does not go far enough to ensure that young repeat offenders face meaningful consequences. We need targeted reforms that hold youth accountable while also providing pathways out of crime, not vague gestures that leave victims feeling abandoned.

In conclusion, the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 is a missed opportunity. It gestures towards reform but stops short of delivering the robust protections that our communities need. If we are serious about preventing reoffending, restoring public order and restoring public confidence in our justice system, we must go further. We must demand a bail system that prioritises safety and accountability and has zero tolerance for repeat violent crime offenders.

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (18:12): I believe I am the last person to speak. I would like to think that we have saved the best till last, but – oh, we do have another person to speak. Okay. Well, they have saved the best till last, and I will just warm everyone up for you. I mean, what can be said? Obviously there are different perceptions on different sides of the chamber. I was talking to someone today on the phone, and they brought up the problems with crime in the community. They said they sort of felt unsafe about going out. They said, ‘I go out and I see the police helicopter up in the air, and I get worried and nervous about things.’ And then she said she went off to a shopping centre and there were police around and she got really frightened that there were so many police around. I just thought that was a really interesting perception. I said to her, ‘The chopper’s up in the air because it’s chasing criminals. It’s up there to keep you safe and make things safer. They’re actually doing the job. They’re keeping you safe, and you should feel safe about it.’ It is the same for the police in the street, you know, the fact that she got nervous that there were a lot of police around. I said, ‘They’re actually looking after you. We’re working to keep you safe and keep crims off the streets.’ This idea of perception from one side of the house to the other is really quite interesting.

From my history as a performer, I always strived for perfection. That is what we do, I guess, in our professional lives. We always work to try and find that perfect moment, that perfect debate or whatever it is. But what I have always found is once you hit what you think might be that line of perfection, it shifts.

A member: What was your perfection?

Paul MERCURIO: I will tell you about that later on over a beer or something. But the idea is that perfection does not exist. It continues to shift, and we continue to strive to do our best. That is what we are doing with the bail laws. Over the years – sorry, it felt like years today listening to some debates – there has been this idea or perception that the bail laws have been weakened. Maybe. That is a perception that some people hold. But in fact what we were doing was striving for perfection, striving to make the bail laws better so that we could better protect community and also better protect those on the fringe of entering into the justice system or on the fringe of committing crime.

I go back and go when the bail laws were changed, they were changed because police did not want kids to be put in jail. Community groups, justice people and even the coroner said that we do not want kids and vulnerable people being put in jail, because that is not the right place for them, and so the bail laws were changed to reflect that community opinion and the opinion of professionals. Okay, there were some unintended consequences from that, and so in striving for perfection and striving to get things better for our community – all of our community – bail laws have been adjusted again, and I

fully support them. I fully support the fact that we continue to work to make things better for our community. That is what our job is in here every day of the week or out in our community. That is just a real quick snapshot of where I sit, having been in the chamber and listening to the debate.

I would like to congratulate the member for Bayswater for his exceptional and outstanding debate. He is a very clever, articulate, genuine, generous and good-looking member. But apart from that, what was so great about his debate – apart from the fact that he looked good in his seat as he did it – was that he has life experience. He is in fact an ex-member of the police force. He spoke with accuracy, with lived experience and with understanding of all of the concepts. As he spoke you could see that he has stood in many a police station, in many a courtroom and dealt with all of the things that we talk about in all the different legislation that we have brought to Parliament. He spoke with the realism that a lot of us, including me, cannot because I have not been in that position. So I certainly thank him for his contribution in bringing light to some of the falsehoods and disingenuous nature of comments made by those on the other side.

I will also take a moment to note that there are other members in this chamber that were police officers that have chosen not to debate this bill today. I wonder, especially after the member for Bayswater's contribution, if the fact is they are not debating the bill because they would have to concur with what the member for Bayswater said, which would be completely against what those on the other side are saying. For those people on that side who have been in the police force, they have not come here to debate this bill because they know we are right. They know what the member for Bayswater said is right and what some people have been saying is not.

There are a lot of things I would like to talk about. One thing that keeps being said in this chamber is that Port Phillip Prison has closed. I believe that is true; it has closed. It was built in 1997 and is almost 30 years old. But every time they have said that Port Phillip is closed, not one person on that side has then backed it up and let people know that Western Plains prison has opened. Sometimes I am just flabbergasted by what is not said. Western Plains prison has opened. It has got more beds than Port Phillip Prison. It is brand new. It is fit for purpose. It is fit for future. It has been designed to be safe – to provide an environment for prisoners that is semi-comfortable but safe. It is safe for prison guards working there. It is safe for the staff that work there and safe for visitors that go to that prison. I just wanted to make that point.

The other point I want to make too is about the 'break bail, face jail' idea. When I was thinking about what that probably meant, it is like 'chuck everyone in jail who does something wrong'. The member for Point Cook, sadly, took a little bit of my thunder on this by mentioning the First Fleet. How dare you!

He mentioned the First Fleet, and I was going to talk about the First Fleet. It came out in 1788, and when it came out it brought the first criminals to Australia. It actually brought 751 criminals to Australia. You mentioned it as well, member for Pascoe Vale; I do apologise. So there are two people in the chamber smarter than me – well, in fact a lot more. Anyway. But think about those people that were convicted in England for crimes – for stealing a loaf of bread because their family were going hungry or doing any of those sorts of things. I had a quick look at what you could be sentenced to Australia for, and there was stealing fish from a pond or river. I guess this is what 'break bail, face jail' time is going to look like if the Liberals get in: if you steal fish from a pond or a river, you will be going to jail for life. There was stealing letters; assaulting or cutting or burning clothing; or stealing roots, trees or plants or destroying them. And the one that I found the most amusing but also the most confusing – especially if it were part of 'break bail, face jail' time – was impersonating an Egyptian. That was actually one of the 19 –

A member interjected.

Paul MERCURIO: I do not know; it was just part of that. Also I note that with 'break bail, face jail' under the 1788 First Fleet, the youngest criminal that came out from England was a young girl by

the name of Mary Wade, and she was just 11. We do not want to do that. We do not want to put young kids in jail. They come out worse off; we know that. We have talked about that time and time again in this place. The best place for them is not in jail. So I believe, again, there have been some complaints about the fact that we have not really necessarily attached the youth portion in the bail law and that those on the other side would just like to lock them in jail and throw away the key. That is not the way to go.

Is this tranche of bail legislation the most perfect it can be? Probably not, because we keep working on things. We are committed to always working for the betterment of our community – of every member in our community. That is our promise to everyone, and we will continue to do that through legislation in this place. I commend the bill to the house.

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (18:22): I rise to speak on the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 in the time that I have left before we move on to other business. What appears to be clear to us on this side of the house is that introducing this bill and other bills since the government watered down the bail laws in March last year is an admission of guilt. It is an admission of guilt from the Allan Labor government. It is an admission that they are soft on crime, that the experiment is failing, that the weakening of bail laws in 2023 was and is a disaster and that Victorians have paid the price with their safety. Even now, this bill exempts dozens of serious indictable offences. These include handling the proceeds of crime, even when the money is worth more than \$10 million. Wow! These are crimes tied to organised crime gangs, yet Labor's bail laws still give these offenders breathing space. Why? I do not know. Why does the government want to give a pass to a person who has been caught with \$10 million of drug money? I would like to know too. Perhaps it is because Labor is not actually serious about getting tough on crime. That is why we have proposed indeed our 'break bail, face jail' policy, which Victorians are crying out for.

That is not to say that we have not got policy as well that speaks to early intervention, that speaks to reintroducing police coming into schools so that there is that rapport there and reintroducing the programs that have been cancelled under this government. That is why we have proposed that at the end of the line there would be this 'break bail, face jail' policy – because the truth in this Allan Labor government in the state of Victoria is that there are youth offenders out there that have committed over 400 offences, who get bailed and bailed and bailed and bailed again and again. That is the truth here. In fact there are youth offenders in Victoria that as soon as they have committed their crime, after 90 minutes there has been a turnaround where they are back out – after being arrested and after being charged and put out on bail – to then commit an offence again. That is the reality of what the bail system, weakened by the Labor government, has done here in Victoria. That is why our policy has real consequences for breaking bail: no free passes for youth offenders and tougher tests for robbery and burglary from day one.

To speak to what the member for Malvern spoke about earlier in his contribution, another one of the bandaid solutions to the government's weak, weak stance on crime is again playing copycat with the opposition, where we had sought five times over in this place, in Parliament, to ban the sale and possession of machetes, and each and every time the coalition sought to introduce that to Parliament or amend that in a bill in Parliament, the government voted against it. Then 18 months later, they decide, 'You know what, that's a good idea. Maybe we'll give that a crack too. What we'll do is we will make machetes illegal, the possession of them, and we'll also have an amnesty. So here's a bright-spark idea. This is what we'll do: we will put these amnesty bins outside of police stations that are brightly lit, that are monitored by CCTV, so that youth offenders on their way to aggravated burglaries can drop off their illegal machetes.' Member for Malvern, make it make sense, please.

You are telling me that the government proposes that a youth offender on their way to an aggravated burglary will think to themselves, 'Hold up a minute, maybe what I'll do is I'll pull up to that cop shop that is under lights. I'll pull up to that cop shop that has got CCTV, and I will go and just dispose of my machete that is illegal, so that they all know who I am.' Get real. That is just simply absurd. How about adopting the policy of the late Les Twentyman, who spent his life trying to get knives off our

streets, working with young people in Australia to reform them, to have the early intervention, to help them stay away from a life of crime? The late Les Twentyman proposed that it should be something that we incentivise, and he was not talking about big-ticket items, he was talking about movie tickets. He was talking about maybe a ticket to a sporting game. How about we honour his legacy, this great Victorian? How about we do that? How about we actually have some pragmatism and be realistic about youth offenders giving up their illegal machetes?

I mean, \$13 million for 40 bins – if you do the maths on that, that is \$325,000 spent per bin. These bins look like charity bins at an op shop. These bins are reminiscent of these bins that you would put outside of an op shop to dispose of clothes. That is the Allan Labor government's priority – to cut \$15 million from the budget for policing, to cut the money, but instead spend \$13 million of taxpayers money on 40 bins at what – I do not know – \$325,000 a pop. You could buy a Ferrari with that, member for Malvern. That is absurd.

Police are straining under Labor's catch-and-release bail system. I spoke to this earlier. Victoria Police are drowning under this system. They are sick of arresting the same people again and again, only to see them back out on the streets before the ink is dry on the paperwork. Earlier this year seven teenagers, six already on bail, were arrested after a police pursuit through Melbourne's west in stolen cars, sometimes at more than 200 kilometres an hour, before smashing into a tree. Among them was a boy who had been released on bail dozens of times. In another case a 14-year-old described by a magistrate as causing terror in the community was released on bail again, despite having close to 400 charges struck out because of his age. This boy has been bailed 50 times. The state should be appalled, the magistrate said in open court, yet he still sent him back into the community because of our weak bail laws, thanks to the Labor government. This same teen has been linked to high-speed police chases, aggravated burglaries and store break-ins.

We know here in Victoria that every 50 seconds offences occur and every hour in Victoria, while someone is home, an aggravated burglary takes place – that is what the criminal justice system looks like under the Allan Labor government. These are not isolated incidents. Crime Statistics Agency data shows child offending is now at its highest level since 2010. Offending by children aged 10 to 13 has exploded, and their involvement in aggravated burglaries, from 18 cases five years ago, is now at 84 since last year. Thirty-five per cent of all child offenders are repeat offenders. Victoria Police say youth crime is now so bad that they have had to launch dedicated operations like Operation Alliance and Operation Trinity, making more than 2700 arrests in the past year alone. This is what Labor's weak bail laws have done. They have normalised the idea that dangerous, repeat high-risk offenders will be caught, released and caught again – revolving door, again and again and again.

The Northland gang member was out on bail and is free in the community today. Many Victorians would remember that back in May this year shoppers at Northland were forced to run for their lives as seven armed offenders, some carrying machetes and even a tomahawk, clashed in broad daylight. Cars were rammed and weapons were brandished. It was not a petty scuffle – it was violent, it was organised, it was terrifying. I had friends there. An elderly couple were separated, the man and his wife in fear because the shopping centre was shut down because of these weapons on our streets that the Allan Labor government failed to act upon. Here is the kicker: two of the worst offenders were already on bail. One of them, Abel Sorzor, was not only on bail but on a good behaviour bond. The other was on four separate bail orders, for armed robbery, assault, weapons offences and theft – four separate bail orders. Under Labor's weak bail system, both of them were free to roam our streets and then free to go into Northland shopping centre and cause terror amongst every Victorian that was watching at home, seeing this take place. They were not sitting at home reflecting on their crimes, they were back out engaging in gang warfare in a public place. What was the ultimate punishment for Sorzor? Not jail – community service.

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (18:32): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Motions

Budget 2025–26

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (18:33): I move:

That this house takes note of the 2025–26 budget papers.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (18:33): I think we are slightly over three months since the budget was first handed down, which shows you that this government does not put a lot of priority on the budget, given the fact that it has taken us three months to wheel back to it finally. As a former Treasurer, if I had handed down this budget, I would be embarrassed to talk about it too. No wonder the government is desperately trying to push this off and kick it down the road. We are probably still going to be debating this budget ahead of next year's budget, I suspect, because it was a shocker.

I have got 15 minutes. I will start off by talking about what is in this budget for Malvern, and that will not take me very long at all, because once again this government plays politics with kids, plays politics with postcodes and does not allocate money to electorates such as mine because it prefers to play politics with everything. The greatest example of how this government has let down the people of my electorate in this budget is that my police station, the Malvern police station, is still restricted to being open 8 hours a day. It may be a case of new information for members opposite, but the sort of people who are undertaking aggravated burglaries in my electorate do not tend to work business hours. They are not the sort of people who work business hours. They tend to work at odd hours. They do not work between 10 am and 6 pm, which are the only hours that my Malvern police station is open to the public.

If a woman fleeing domestic violence or family violence wants to find a safe place in a time of danger and a time stress and turns up to the Malvern police station any time in those 16 hours of the day, do you know what she will find? She will find a locked door and she will find a sign on the footpath that says, 'This station is closed. You can go to Prahran.' Well, that is not a lot of help for a woman fleeing family violence. That is not a lot of help for somebody who is worried about their safety or worried about their life.

I think before members opposite start making light of the fact that under their watch 43 police stations have had their hours cut – these are decisions which are caused by government budget cutbacks. This budget alone saw over \$50 million in direct cuts to the Victoria Police budget. \$50 million dollars in cuts are there in black and white in the budget papers. This government has cut funding to Victoria Police, and when they cut, police stations close. That is what has happened in Malvern. 1100 is the number of vacancies on the Victoria Police roster. How on earth does this government think they are going to reopen police stations, including the 43 they have closed, when they have got 1100 vacancies on the Victoria Police roster? What has been their riding order to the new Chief Commissioner of Police? 'There's no more money – stick within your budget.' That is what he has been told, and that is what he has said publicly: there is no more money. In fact there is less money; there is \$50 million less than there was last year.

My police station is closed. My constituents are subject to increasing numbers of aggravated burglaries and increasing numbers of car thefts, and when people fleeing violent situations at home want to go to a place of safety, 16 hours a day they face a locked door. That is the legacy of this government and

this government's budget, and it is absolutely disgraceful. They have done nothing to improve community safety in my electorate.

John Lister interjected.

Michael O'BRIEN: Well, if the member for Werribee can find his way to Malvern, I invite him to walk down Glenferrie Road with me and speak to my constituents and ask them what they think of this government closing the police station 16 hours a day. It is a disgrace what they have done.

John Lister: It's an independent process.

Michael O'BRIEN: It is not an independent process. The government has cut the funding. They have 1100 vacancies on the roster. This is a government decision – a political decision. I will tell you what, the people of Malvern know it is a political decision. They know it is a political decision. It is not just in Malvern but in 42 other stations across Victoria. When the decision was announced, it was expressed as being temporary. Well, here we are two years on with no sign of that station reopening. How temporary is it? Or was it just another Labor mistruth?

If the member for Werribee did manage to get himself a *Melway* and find his way over to Malvern, he would notice the potholes on the road. I remember when I was first elected to this place that country members would talk about the state of the roads. We had National Party members regularly commenting that 'When you fix country roads, you save country lives.' But it was very much seen as being a country issue; it was not a metropolitan issue. But these days wherever you go across Melbourne, and particularly in my electorate of Malvern, the potholes could swallow cars whole. They are shocking, they are dangerous and they are causing damage.

Members interjecting.

Michael O'BRIEN: Well, members opposite can laugh. Perhaps they can tell the cyclist who wrote to me and told me how he was on his bike, fell into a pothole, fell off his bike and broke his shoulder.

Members interjecting.

Michael O'BRIEN: Oh, the member for Werribee thinks it is funny when my constituents break their shoulders because of potholes on Toorak Road. Let him have a big laugh about it. It just shows the absolutely disgraceful attitude that members opposite have towards my constituents and in fact to all Victorians. They do not care how many of them get injured, how many of them see their bikes damaged or their cars damaged or how much personal injury is caused because of these potholes; they just continue to go about their way. It never used to be an issue that metropolitan members would talk about, the state of the roads. Now it is one that every single member is concerned about.

Let us talk about ambulance services.

I have had constituents contacting me and talking about calling for ambulances for very sick parents and the ambulances just not turning up, just not showing up at all. What a disgraceful indictment of this government. They cannot run an ambulance service that is there for people in their time of need. I have been here long enough to remember when we were in government and members opposite used to talk about ambulances. They used to talk about ambulances then, and apparently every issue with the ambulance service was the government's fault. Now they walk away. Now they have no responsibility, apparently, for ambulances. My constituents know that the ambulances cannot be relied on when they call 000.

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): Order! I would like to hear the member for Malvern.

Michael O'BRIEN: They can yell at me all they like. They can try and shut me down; they are not going to do it. They are not going to shut me down, because I am here to stand up for the people of my electorate, who are sick and tired of the basic needs of the state not being met because we have got

an incompetent government that cannot manage the budget, cannot manage money and cannot manage service delivery. I am not about to take any lectures from people opposite who have been in government for 11 long years while things have gone backwards on every single measure.

Level crossings – well, we have still got three level crossings in my electorate. They have been independently ranked as being some of the worst in the state, but of course this government will not do a damn thing about them. In fact all this Labor government has done was to say no to \$260 million that the then federal coalition government put on the table to remove the Glenferrie Road level crossing. This government would rather say no to money so they can look after themselves.

My local state schools have received no investment from this government. The locals – who pay their taxes, who work hard and who believe that every child who goes to a state school should have the same opportunities – are being ripped off by this Labor government, because this Labor government does not give a damn about people in my electorate.

Sporting facilities – I see nice new sporting facilities in Labor electorates and marginal seats. When was the last time this government put any money into my electorate? I think Moses was a boy the last time this government put in any money.

Brad Rowswell interjected.

Michael O'BRIEN: A long time ago, member for Sandringham. So there is nothing in this budget for my electorate whatsoever.

Let us talk about Victoria. In the 2014 election the pre-election budget update had debt being \$21.8 billion – \$21.8 billion. In the time since Labor has been in office – it is now on track to be \$194 billion. It is not like they have grown the economy that much. Debt to gross state product in 2014 was 5.9 per cent. It is now 25.1 per cent. We have gone from having the best debt in the country to the worst debt in the country. We have gone from having the best credit rating in the country – stable AAA – to the worst credit rating in the country. Because of that our interest bill has gone up. It used to be \$2.2 billion. Now it is on track for \$10.6 billion, a nearly quintupling of the interest burden for Victorian families.

This is all because this government is incompetent and cannot manage money. This government would rather pay over the odds to their mates in the corrupt CFMEU – the gangsters in the CFMEU, the criminals in the CFMEU.

John Lister: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, on relevance, I believe this is a budget take-note motion, and I do not think the CFMEU are mentioned in the state budget.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): I do not uphold the point of order, but the member is meant to reflect on the budget take-note motion.

Michael O'BRIEN: I am going to reflect on the CFMEU, Acting Speaker; not even you can stop me doing that. I am going to reflect on them because they are a bunch of crooks; they are a bunch of organised criminals. As the *Age* and *60 Minutes* have demonstrated only too well, they are a bunch of crooks and organised criminals who have been ripping money out of the pockets of Victorians overpaying for infrastructure –

Luba Grigorovitch: On a point of order, Acting Speaker: relevance.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): There is no point of order.

Michael O'BRIEN: They are very touchy about this. It is almost like some of them are beholden to the CFMEU – who would have thought? We have gone from having some of the lowest tax in the country to now the highest tax in the country. The tax burden used to be \$17.9 billion in 2014, now it is \$41.7 billion. Are we seeing such a massively improved outcome in terms of public services? No. Are we seeing more police? No. Are we seeing our ambulances performing better? No. Are we seeing

more investment in our local schools? No, we are not. Employee expenses were \$18.5 billion in 2014 – they are now on track for \$38.9 billion this financial year. We have seen a doubling in the budget for employee expenses. Are we seeing a doubling in the number of police? No. Are we seeing a doubling in the number of nurses? No. Are we seeing a doubling of the number of teachers? No. Are we seeing a doubling in the number of firefighters? No. We are seeing all the backroom bureaucrats and spin doctors that this government uses. They are the ones who have sucked up so much of this additional expenditure that has come right out of the pockets of Victorians.

Look at unemployment. The forecast for unemployment in 2025–26 is anaemic – 0.50 per cent, one of the worst economic growth forecasts for employment this state has ever seen. For 16 consecutive months Victoria has had the worst unemployment rate in the country, and their forecast is for the most anaemic growth in employment this state has seen in a long time. I am very proud that under the government of which I had the privilege to be Treasurer for two budgets, Victoria created more jobs in our four years than any state in the country.

Lily D'Ambrosio interjected.

Michael O'BRIEN: Well, Minister, the ABS does not lie. Unlike the government, the ABS does not lie. We created more jobs in Victoria over our four years than any other state in the country. The problem is this is a government that is incompetent. They have got the C-team now at the ministerial front bench – the absolute C-team – and it shows. I almost feel sorry for –

Paul Edbrooke: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, on facts, Victoria has the highest growth economically in the nation.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): That is not a point of order.

Michael O'BRIEN: It is not a point of order – it is not even a point, Member for Frankston. Highest taxes, highest interest, worst credit rating, worst unemployment – that is the legacy of this government. Taxes, interest, debt, unemployment – that is the legacy of this government. They are hopeless. They are absolutely useless. They fundamentally just are not up to the job. So when I take note on this budget paper I take note that this is a government that cannot manage money, cannot manage the economy and Victorians are paying the price.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (18:48): Wow, does it give me great pleasure to rise to speak to this take-note motion on our budget of this year. Goodness me, I have got to say, because I know that we have all been thinking it on this side of the chamber: what is it about the men in the Liberal Party? Why do they have to shout so loudly in this place? Why do you have to shout so loudly to be heard?

Paul Edbrooke: Into a microphone.

Gary MAAS: That is exactly right.

Michael O'Brien interjected.

Gary MAAS: No, it is not.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): Through the Chair, member for Narre Warren South.

Gary MAAS: The member for Malvern is interjecting. But didn't he just show how in touch he was when he pulled out the Melway? Oh, my goodness me. When he pulled out the Melway –

Brad Rowswell: Acting Speaker, my point of order is relevance.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): There is no point of order. The member was responding to matters that had been raised by the member for Malvern.

Gary MAAS: You could just see the Melway sitting under the 1979 Merc there, just pulling it out, having a look.

Let me tell you something, member for Malvern: when it comes to talking about red maps, what we talk about in the south-east are the seat of Narre Warren South, the seat of Narre Warren North, Mulgrave, Dandenong, Cranbourne and Pakenham. These are the red maps. That is what we are talking about. These are the people who are focused on what matters most. These are the people, including the rest of Victoria, who are why this great budget which was passed by this government is important for all Victorians, because we are absolutely committed to and focused on what matters most to most Victorians. It is about priorities. I know this from my constituents in Narre Warren South who have told me that they are so happy that we have invested in support for them. When it comes to the cost of living and when it comes to strengthening our frontline services, they know who is on their side. When things get tough, good governments just do not look away; they show up, they front up and they be the adults in the room. Our government continues to show up, and we have delivered on many things.

In a couple of weeks time – I think 26 August – a \$100 power saving bonus comes into play for eligible concession households, and this will provide enormous energy bill relief to those doing it tough in our community. We show up. We are here, and we are showing up by delivering more solar rebates so more people can slash money off their power bills and make their homes more energy efficient.

We show up for families by reducing the costs that can add up and put a strain on the family budget. This includes public transport as well, and what an announcement – to make public transport free for everyone under 18 in Victoria. We cannot wait until New Year's Day – what a day to celebrate. People will be celebrating on New Year's Eve. There will be no hangover on 1 January, because there will be lots to celebrate, and this will mean thousands of dollars in savings for families. It is a massive investment that puts money back in the pockets of families, particularly those who have multiple kids who use public transport to get to school or to get where they need. The concept of a youth myki, which will benefit more than 1 million young Victorians and their families, will mean cheaper school runs and more affordable weekend outings from 1 January next year.

Also coming in on that day – it is not just our youth that we are looking after, it is also our seniors –

Steve McGhie interjected.

Gary MAAS: The member for Melton is very happy about this announcement. We have also cut the cost of public transport to those aged over 60 with a seniors card. Have you got a seniors card?

Steve McGhie interjected.

Gary MAAS: The member for Melton has a seniors card with free travel over weekends, and that is set to begin next year as well.

Our government believes that no child should miss out on the things that make being a kid fun. They should not miss out on things that make going to school good. We have increased the Camps, Schools and Excursions Fund, meaning that families with a healthcare card or concession card will see payments increased to \$400 from 1 January next year. In Narre Warren South that means so much, because prior to the government having these sorts of initiatives, I know that schools were making the decision not to run camps. Can you believe that? They were not running camps, but because this government is putting effort into making sure that our kids are learning in different environments, this is now back on the table for schools that need it. I was particularly happy with that budget announcement.

Additionally this budget invests in expanding the Get Active Kids vouchers to deliver more than 65,000 extra vouchers to families who need it most. Whether that is a kick of the footy or a lob of the netball, kids should not be unable to play the sport they love because of the cost of a registration fee or the price of equipment and uniforms.

When it comes to local infrastructure, in Narre Warren South we know that sport infrastructure is important. We know that having those facilities is good for the health of everyone in our community,

especially our young. It is good for physical health, it is good for mental health but it is also good for our sense of belonging and for our sense of connection with others. Our community should have the very best facilities for practice and for play. I was really, really thrilled with this year's budget announcement that KM Reedy Reserve is receiving a \$250,000 investment to upgrade lighting at the local soccer pitch. \$250,000 does not sound like a lot, but it is – in terms of bang for buck, you really get a lot there. With so many different clubs, and not only in the local area, using that facility, what it means is that the expanding women's teams and the expanding all-abilities teams in my part of the world can train and can play their games well into the night. It adds another 4 or 5 hours, especially throughout those winter months, to allow people to connect with one another, to socialise and to get healthy and to get fit. KM Reedy Reserve is a very proud home to those incredible local soccer clubs, including the Hampton Park United Sparrows. I would like at this point to acknowledge Faz and Ramsey, who passionately advocated for that investment. I am very happy that has been delivered. I was really rapt to head down to KM Reedy Reserve recently to speak to them about those lights and just what this is going to mean for the clubs who use that pitch.

I mentioned earlier the frontline services. Our frontline services do so much for us. I know that many of us in here believe that, and we know that they need continued investment. I am so happy that as a part of a \$21 million statewide investment we are funding the fit-out of a CFA satellite station in Lynbrook in my electorate. That CFA satellite station is managed by the hardworking Hampton Park Fire Brigade. The investment will ensure that local volunteers will have the facilities they need to respond to call-outs much faster and continue to keep our community safe during emergencies. I thank those at the Hampton Park Fire Brigade who have worked with me over the last little while to advocate for this very important upgrade.

When it comes to health, and in particular health care and our community pharmacy program, this budget invests a further \$18 million to expand the community pharmacy pilot program. It makes it easier for people in my community to get treatment for a range of conditions at their local pharmacy. Our local pharmacies and their staff do so much to help residents with their health issues and management of their ailments and now they will be able to provide even more services to help people.

When it comes to health in this state, just as a slight aside and with the opposition's indulgence on this one, I will just say that I have absolutely enormous respect for our emergency services and for our health sector. As someone who has not really had a lot of interaction as a parent with the health sector, I must say that last week I received the telephone call that parents just do not want to receive. It was a telephone call from a paramedic who said, 'Your 14-year-old daughter has been in a fall. All we can say to you is she is in our care and we're about to transfer her to the Royal Children's Hospital. We think you should meet us in emergency.' There was not too much more that was added to that, but it is, as I said, not the call that you want to get. However –

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Main Road–Grand Boulevard, Montmorency

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (19:00): (1251) I raise tonight a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and while not a matter directly in my electorate, it certainly impacts my electorate. It is in relation to an intersection at the corner of Main Road and Grand Boulevard in Montmorency. I know this area well, having grown up very close to it. I have been contacted by a number of residents in my area and in Lower Plenty and Montmorency who have advised me about the intersection of

Grand Boulevard and Main Road. While there was a car accident some months ago which took out a number of the traffic lights, they have not been replaced. They are very, very concerned about the safety of that intersection and what might occur given that, as I understand it, the right turn lights have been taken out and not replaced to date. It is a basic and straightforward safety issue, and the lights should have been replaced if there has been a vehicle accident. I understand it is no-one's fault as such, but it does need to be repaired, and in terms of the safety of that intersection, it does need to be fixed. This is for the people in Montmorency and Lower Plenty who are putting up with quite a busy intersection. Main Road and Grand Boulevard are quite busy. Main Road down through to Lower Plenty is very busy, coming from Eltham into the city. If you are not going through Fitzsimons Lane over through Templestowe, you are going straight over through Main Road and Lower Plenty, so it is quite a busy intersection. The local ambulance station is actually on the corner there at Apex Way, so it is right at the corner of the intersection as well. I seek for the minister for roads to intervene and to expedite the repair of this dangerous intersection as quickly as possible.

Smile Squad

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (19:02): (1252) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health. The action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the rollout and reach of the Victorian government's Smile Squad free dental school program across schools in the Kororoit electorate. Smile Squad is an outstanding initiative that is making a real difference to the lives of Victorian children by offering free dental check-ups and treatments to students at government schools. This program is helping ensure that every child, regardless of their background or household income, has access to quality oral health care. In a diverse and growing community like Kororoit, which includes suburbs such as Deer Park, Caroline Springs and Albanvale, the need for accessible preventative health care is especially important. Many families in my community face cost-of-living pressures and may delay or miss out on dental treatment for their children. Smile Squad is obviously helping close that gap. I have heard from parents and principals who are deeply appreciative of the support that this program brings. Mobile dental vans visiting schools have not only made it easier for families to access care but have also helped improve health outcomes and reduce stigma for kids who need treatment. I am therefore interested to know, as part of this update, how many students in Kororoit have accessed Smile Squad services to date and how many local schools have been visited by the Smile Squad team. Programs like Smile Squad show the real on-the-ground impact of the Labor government's commitment to health equity and support for families.

Patient transport

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (19:03): (1253) My adjournment is to the Minister for Health, and the action that I seek is that the minister show some heart and reinstate the Victorian patient transport assistance scheme subsidy for a young girl in Yarrawonga. For various reasons, I need to keep this young girl's name anonymous, but I will forward her details to the minister's office. I want to say that her treatment is completely unfair. At the age of five she was diagnosed with a brain tumour, and she has had ongoing treatment at both Albury cancer centre and Melbourne. Her mum is a single mum juggling two other children and the financial pressures of life. This young girl has been having weekly chemotherapy, and until now there have been no issues on VPTAS reimbursement. The chemotherapy has now been increased to two to three days per week for another 12 months, at 13 years of age.

Somebody from the Department of Health team has now emailed the family to say the distance from her house to the Albury cancer centre is 97.7 kilometres, not the 100 kilometres that is the threshold for VPTAS, and it will no longer be reimbursed, having been reimbursed for the last eight years. If this anonymous person from the department bothered to drive the roads in north-east Victoria, they would see the Murray Valley Highway around Rutherglen has been closed for maintenance more often than it has been open. Therefore the fastest route to Albury cancer centre is via the New South Wales side rather than the Victorian side, which is 118 kilometres. For eight years this family has been

reimbursed for travel. Now that Victoria has been driven to the brink of financial obscurity, we find families like this are now being asked to fund their own travel.

A single mum with three children in a cost-of-living crisis is now told to fund two to three days per week out of the family budget because the most direct route is not the fastest route due to road maintenance. I ask the minister to reconsider the VPTAS application and support this family as they have been supported for the last eight years. The Yarrowonga community will be at boiling point when this news spreads.

Hastings electorate landmarks

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (19:05): (1254) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Environment and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events. The action I seek is for the minister to come down to the electorate of Hastings to tour two significant environmental properties that also have strong tourism elements to their businesses. I have spoken about both these properties over the years. They are significant environmental, cultural, historical and important landmarks that offer a glimpse into the past and also into the future.

Coolart homestead was built by Frederick Grimwade back in 1895, although there are barracks onsite that were built in the 1860s. Tom Luxton purchased Coolart in 1937 and immediately had the property declared a sanctuary for native wildlife. He had a great interest in bird life. His passion and foresight meant the wetlands were preserved, and today they provide a home for many species of birds and much pleasure for birdwatchers. They also have built a pavilion there that the community can hire out for community events, but also to watch birds.

The Willum Warrain gathering place opened in 2014 and since that time has grown steadily, offering First Nations people a place to gather, support and celebrate their culture and history. Fourteen staff are now employed there. They have an adult Aboriginal membership of 660 people and a further reach of 2500 people through kin. They have an amazing bush nursery, which is 100 per cent Aboriginal community owned and specialises in local indigenous plants. They are currently growing over 170 species. Through the bush nursery they want to not only sell plants but share cultural knowledge, for every plant has its own dreaming. I look forward to showing the minister these amazing two places and talking to him about the important environmental work they do for the electorate.

Neighbourhood houses

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (19:07): (1255) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Carers and Volunteers, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in meeting with neighbourhood centres in my electorate of Hawthorn to hear directly from them about their need for funding, support and an acknowledgement of the critical role they play in our community. There are around 400 neighbourhood centres across Victoria. Each is vital to the grassroots organisations that deliver a wide range of services, programs and support to people of all ages, stages of life and backgrounds. From adult education and training opportunities to the provision of mental health support, health and wellness activities, emergency relief and practical support, the value these neighbourhood houses provide is staggering and a form of crucial help for our social infrastructure, especially in rural, regional and outer suburban areas.

In my electorate of Hawthorn there are five neighbourhood houses: two in Camberwell and one each in Surrey Hills, Hawthorn and Canterbury. Much of the work undertaken in these centres is powered by volunteers and staff who go above and beyond in responding to local needs with limited funding and resources. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tireless work and dedication of a few in my electorate: Mary Liston from Bowen Street Community Centre; Rochelle Anderson of Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre; Kate Clampett, Fiona Waring and Trish Scharer from Hawthorn Community House; Liz Finucan from Camberwell Community Centre; and Tracey Martin from Canterbury Neighbourhood Centre. Each of these remarkable leaders reflects the type of commitment and expertise we see right across this sector.

In the Neighbourhood Houses Victoria values report the minister can read, for example, that the Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre had an income of \$419,771, while the value it contributed in improved quality of life through social connection, volunteer contributions, emergency relief and other vital services was \$1.9 million. The community value equates to a benefit of \$4.65 for every \$1 of income, a benefit of \$19.81 for every \$1 of neighbourhood house coordination program funding and a benefit of over \$472.40 for every hour the neighbourhood house is in use. A similar scenario would describe the great work of other neighbourhood houses across my electorate and indeed across the state.

I respectfully urge the minister to consider the current funding and support received by these magnificent neighbourhood houses and to review the funding they receive in accordance with the value, benefits and scope of services delivered.

Monbulk electorate road safety

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (19:09): (1256) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit the Monbulk district to experience the condition and challenges of some of our state roads. Our roads across the hills are winding, narrow and often heavily trafficked. These roads are essential not only for daily travel but also for emergency services, freight and tourism. Whilst I acknowledge the work that has been done to maintain and upgrade sections of the network, there remain areas of concern which do require further attention. Residents regularly raise issues with me regarding road safety, visibility, drainage and maintenance. A visit from the minister would provide an opportunity for her to see these roads and their challenges, and I look forward to her visiting my district.

Housing

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (19:10): (1257) My adjournment matter is for the Attorney-General, and the action that I seek is to release the documents relating to the decision to demolish Victoria's public housing. The Labor government are increasingly under fire for their plan to displace more than 10,000 public housing residents in the middle of a housing crisis, demolish public housing and hand over the land to private interests. Experts of all stripes have testified that the plan will exacerbate homelessness. It will retraumatise vulnerable residents. It will strain our healthcare system and create unimaginable amounts of landfill and carbon emissions and cost taxpayers billions in demolition, construction and private sector contracts. With an eye-watering financial, social and environmental cost to the state just to demolish one of these towers, Victoria should expect that a decision to multiply that by 44, plus all of the walk-ups that they are demolishing as well, would involve meticulous planning and assessment, detailed condition reports, a cost-benefit analysis for retrofitting as opposed to demolishing, and feasibility studies exploring the options for each one of these towers.

While it appears that the Labor government have taken a one-size-fits-all approach to the towers and refused to provide any evidence whatsoever that backs up their plan, the Homes Victoria CEO Simon Newport last week at the parliamentary inquiry testified that this work had actually been done. Four times in response to questions he said that the government did in fact consider retrofit analyses relevant to all 44 towers in order to conduct a proper cost-benefit analysis. But when the documents relating to this decision were called on by Parliament, they were denied under claims of executive privilege. The rules of the chamber require those documents to be produced, even under executive privilege, to the mover of the motion and the clerks to independently assess whether executive privilege is appropriately claimed. In defiance of this chamber, this has not happened.

It leaves us wondering: if the plan stacks up, what is the government hiding, what do these documents actually reveal and do they exist at all? This Labor government operates under a shroud of secrecy, and it must end. What you call executive privilege is just a total absence of accountability. When it costs this state so much, when so many people are impacted and when the flow-on effects are so far-reaching, Victorians deserve better. That is why I am calling on the Attorney-General to release the documents and show the people of Victoria the transparency they deserve.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members that ‘you’ refers to the Chair and is a reflection on the Chair.

Mulgrave electorate small business

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (19:13): (1258) My adjournment is for the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs. The action I seek is that the minister joins me in Mulgrave to visit some of the incredible businesses that are contributing to the Victorian economy. Mulgrave is an absolute hub of economic activity. Be they small business or large corporations, Mulgrave is playing an important role in the Victorian economy. Our small businesses are the backbone of Mulgrave’s economy, and as part of my role I get the privilege of visiting so many. Within the electorate we have delicious Vietnamese iced coffee at Cafe Dai Gia in Springvale, delicious fish and chips with an incredible view at Waverley Park at the Stadium Fish & Chippery, and Chilean food from La Bohemia Cafe in Noble Park, right next to my office. There is no limit on the delicious food and drink being served by small businesses in Mulgrave.

Manufacturing continues to be an important part of the local economy in Mulgrave. We are home to Australia Merch Co, who are manufacturing clothing which many may have in their closet without knowing it, including the merchandise used on Billie Eilish’s most recent tour. To my surprise, whilst reading the state budget books, I also found out that the books themselves are manufactured at Valiant Doculink Press in Mulgrave.

Have a look at your state budget books. I have also checked out Keg King, where they are producing high-quality home brewing equipment, and enjoyed a cheeky trial, might I say, of how the equipment can be used. It is not just small business here in Mulgrave, the electorate is also home to the Pfizer advanced pharmaceutical manufacturing hub, where millions are being invested into our future. From investment into superbugs and hard-to-fight infections, our medical manufacturing industry is alive and thriving. I am proud to be part of a government which understands and invests in jobs and manufacturing, and I hope to show the minister soon what Mulgrave has to offer.

Latrobe Valley employment

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (19:15): (1259) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Premier, and the action I seek is a detailed explanation about why the Latrobe Valley, and specifically the closure of its coal-fired power industry, is not the focus of any government policy. In just three years the ageing Yallourn power station will close, then in 2032 Loy Yang A will shut, shortly followed by Loy Yang B. These three power stations, all in my electorate, represent thousands of jobs and currently on average generate two-thirds of the state’s baseload power every day. The Premier and the Minister for Energy and Resources claim they are forging ahead with the transition to renewables at a rapid rate, making great strides securing Victoria’s energy future, but they are they recklessly continue to ignore two realities: (1) renewables at the current rate of investment and construction absolutely will not create enough baseload power in time for the closure of coal-fired power stations; and (2) the Latrobe Valley has been left behind, neglected and turfed aside in talks about energy transition, despite being the epicentre of energy generation.

We are at a critical juncture in history for energy security and for the future and viability of the Latrobe Valley. Labor is hell-bent on ripping out the industrial heart of our region, all without a single policy or plan to replace thousands of jobs and without a single policy or plan for the future after coal. This sustained neglect of our region, which will be hit hardest by this transition, is a complete and utter disgrace and a total failure from the government. Worse still is the fact that Labor recognises the dire situation facing the valley, and instead of doing something about it they weaponise it by promoting the SEC coming back to Morwell, and it would create 59,000 jobs. I have been shouting from the rooftops since I was elected in this place, pleading with the Labor government to do something, anything, to address the job crisis in the Latrobe Valley and come up with a tangible plan for our future post coal.

I was lucky enough to host Skye Blackshaw as a parliamentary intern this semester, and Skye hit the nail on the head in her report with this finding:

The Latrobe Valley is not the focus of any government policy ... causing its specific needs through the energy transition to be overlooked, despite being Gippsland's most disadvantaged region.

Footscray Hospital

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (19:18): (1260) My adjournment is for the Minister for Health Infrastructure, and the action I seek is that the minister come and join me in showing our local groups, including my seniors, my multicultural community, my schools and my community organisations, the fantastic work that we have done in building the brand new Footscray Hospital. The minister and I have on many occasions visited the site, most recently last week in fact, and I have to say it was such a great visit; it was smiles all round. The Premier dropped in to have a bit of a quiet walk around to check out just how amazing this brand new hospital is. I have to say I cannot wait until our community is able to experience the incredible benefits and the uplift that will be delivered through this outstanding \$1.5 billion investment in health services for Melbourne's west. Once fully operational it will deliver more than 500 beds, and that will be a 66 per cent increase on the existing hospital for patients right across the west. This is actually going to allow for an extra 15,000 people to be treated every year and an additional 20,000 people to be seen by the bigger and better emergency department that we have built there at the hospital.

This will support over 4500 staff members who are being trained as we speak to start work there, and from what I have heard from Western Health, they absolutely cannot wait to start work in their brand new hospital.

Other services that this hospital is going to offer are mental health, drug and alcohol treatment and intensive coronary care, which will also be transitioned to the new site. There are going to be 16 operating theatres, and the hospital is set to become the surgery capital of Melbourne's west. This is a really exciting time for my community, and I know they cannot wait to get in and have a sneak peek. I have got a very long waitlist for people that want to jump on these tours, and that is exactly why I would absolutely love the minister to join me and show my local community around the hospital that is going to be saving lives and changing lives in the gateway to Melbourne's west.

Responses

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (19:21): We heard from the member for Bulleen, whose action was to seek repair of the lights that were damaged at the intersection of Grand Boulevard and Main Road in Montmorency. The member for Kororoit sought an update from the Minister for Health on the Smile Squad for her community. The member for Ovens Valley is asking the Minister for Health to reinstate a Victorian patient transport assistance scheme subsidy for a young local in his community, and he will forward the details to the minister. The member for Hastings raised an adjournment matter for the Minister for Environment, inviting him to come down and visit some of the important and significant local areas in his community. The member for Hawthorn sought for the Minister for Carers and Volunteers to meet with the neighbourhood centres in his community.

The member for Monbulk issued an invitation to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to visit her community to see firsthand some of the challenges of her local roads. The member for Richmond raised an adjournment matter for the Attorney-General, seeking the release of documents regarding the replacement of public housing towers with new housing. The member for Mulgrave raised an adjournment matter for the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, inviting him to come to Mulgrave and see the incredible businesses making a contribution to Victoria's economy. The member for Morwell sought for the Premier to give an explanation regarding the closure of local power stations and unemployment in the valley. The member for Laverton raised an adjournment matter for the

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Minister for Health Infrastructure and invited her to join her and local groups to discuss their new community hospital. These will all be referred to the ministers.

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

House adjourned 7:22 pm.