

PROOF

Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 28 August 2025

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Thursday 28 August 2025

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

Business of the house

Notices of motion

Notice given.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Major Events Act 2009 – Major Sporting Event Orders for the:

New Orleans Pelicans v Melbourne United (3 October 2025)

New Orleans Pelicans v South East Melbourne Phoenix (5 October 2025)

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

Baw Baw – C151

Bayside – C209

Boroondara – C420

Campaspe – C127

Maroondah – C153

Stonnington – C353

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 82.

Motions

Motions by leave

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:36): I move, by leave:

That this house notes that IGA stores across the south-east of Melbourne have been forced to lock their doors against swarming gangs and machete-armed youth, leaving staff traumatised, reflecting the urgent need of the government to deliver stronger protections and tougher penalties without further delay.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK: I move, by leave:

That this house calls on the Minister for Police to urgently meet with retailers targeting the recent crime wave to discuss how the government and Victoria Police can better support them to keep their customers safe.

Leave refused.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (09:36): I move, by leave:

That this house notes that this Monday 25 August Israeli forces attacked Nasser Hospital, killing at least 21 people, including five journalists, as well as medics and rescue workers, drawing widespread global condemnation, and urges the Victorian Labor government to immediately cut diplomatic, commercial and military ties with Israel.

Leave refused.

*Business of the house***Adjournment**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (09:37): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 9 September 2025.

Motion agreed to.

*Members statements***Father Nhan Le and Father David Cartwright**

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (09:38): I rise today to celebrate two very special people in my electorate, Father Nhan Le of St Martin de Porres, Avondale Heights, and Father David Cartwright of St John Bosco's, Niddrie. On 1 May 2014 the parish of St Martin de Porres in Avondale Heights was gifted something truly special with Father Nhan's arrival. For over a decade Father Nahn has been a faithful presence in our community, providing spiritual guidance and heartfelt support through baptisms, communions, weddings and funerals. His dedication has touched countless lives, especially among our local Vietnamese and Italian families. His ability to connect across cultures, generations and life experience has made him a pillar of strength and compassion in our community. So many families in my electorate have benefitted from the support of Fr Nhan, and for that I am truly grateful.

I also want to pay a special mention to Father David Cartwright of St John Bosco's, Niddrie. Father Cartwright took over St John Bosco's in 2024, following the well-worn and famous shoes of Father Thomas Toretciu. Father David Cartwright, who was ordained in the jubilee year of 2000, recently celebrated a milestone in his vocation, celebrating the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. I want to congratulate him and wish him all the very best at St John Bosco's.

Niddrie electorate work experience student

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (09:39): Finally, can I give a shout-out to Ava from Braybrook College, who is doing work experience in my electorate this week and has been a great helping hand both in Niddrie and in Parliament. Thank you, Ava. Keep up the good work.

St Kilda PCYC

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:39): 'Empowering youth for life' – I could not think of a better thing that we all should be doing right now, and that is the motto of the St Kilda PCYC. It was founded in 1947 by Mrs Olive Johnston as the St Kilda Boys Club, and that has been an engagement program ever since. This program and this group are desperate to expand their facilities. We want to work with them, and I encourage the government to work with them and the police to ensure we empower more youth to fulfil their dreams and tackle the youth crisis that we are all seeing at the moment.

Oakwood School

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:40): Also, education can change people's lives. I particularly want to give a shout-out to Oakwood School, Caulfield campus, which I visited, which is doing an amazing job with young people, getting them on the right track. There is a second campus that is being opened in Ormond at the moment, and Oakwood are busier now than ever because young people are disengaged from school. This is a great model that we should be also looking at expanding. I want to thank principal Nathan Vogt and Paul for showing me around the school and the great work that they are doing.

Caulfield Primary School

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:40): Konichiwa. It was a pleasure to attend the Caulfield Primary School's *Pirates of the Curry Bean* concert only a few days ago and to see over 400 kids appearing on stage – a great job. They are a Japanese bilingual school that really teach kids a great way to be able to perform but also great skills. Arigatou gozaimasu to all of the school, and thank you for inviting me to the musical.

Al Siraat College

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:41): I rise to acknowledge the achievements of two outstanding community organisations in my electorate. Al Siraat College is a fantastic Islamic school on the border of Epping and Wollert. The school is deeply engaged with our local community, and its students are often seen volunteering and giving back more broadly. That is why I was so pleased that the Allan Labor government has approved Al Siraat receiving \$3.1 million towards stage 1 of its new years 7 to 9 learning neighbourhood. This exciting development will deliver 10 new classrooms, a library, project and specialist spaces, staff areas, multipurpose and collaboration areas, sporting facilities, amenities and a basketball court. It was wonderful to meet with principal Fazeel Arain when the announcement was first made and to visit the students and school staff last week to celebrate the news together. Mr Arain showed me the stunning designs, and I very much look forward to seeing them come to life.

South Morang Scout Group

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:42): I also want to acknowledge the South Morang Scout Group, which held its annual report and presentation evening last Monday at The Lakes college. The group has grown to four times the size it was only a few years ago – an incredible achievement. My thanks go to Whittlesea district commissioner Tim Purdy, along with Amanda Silver, Shamir Muhammad, Eka Sari, Lauren Clark, Nicole Black, Michael Nyssen, Belinda Hooper, Becc Kortmann, Stephan Kong and Debbie Wong. These dedicated volunteers give so much of their time and energy, bringing joy and opportunity to local young people. I want to thank them for their incredible work as well as to congratulate the Scouts on their well-deserved awards and accomplishments for the year.

Vietnam Veterans Day

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (09:42): Last year Vietnam veterans in Seymour thought they had held their final service. With numbers dwindling and most now in their 80s, they felt they could no longer continue. But this year something truly special happened. Students from Seymour College, guided by their defence mentor Kelly Quigg and supported by the RSL, proudly took the lead. They embraced the traditions, they learned the history and delivered a service that brought together more than 200 people. It was moving, respectful and full of hope, a sign our veterans' legacy is in safe hands.

Euroa electorate horseracing

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (09:43): I had the pleasure of attending our region's stallion parades recently, a real showcase of why Nagambie is the heartbeat of Victorian racing. Champion stallions like Rubick, Toronado and Written Tycoon all call our region home, and studs like Swettenham, Yulong, Darley, Yarran, Seymour Park and newcomer Lovatsville are leading the way. These studs do not just shape the track, they drive jobs, investment and businesses across our community. Thoroughbred racing is a major economic engine room for regional Victoria, and I am proud that so much of it starts right here in the Euroa electorate.

Allen and Lizette Snaith

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (09:43): I congratulate Allen and Lizette Snaith of Warialda Belted Galloway, who were awarded producer legends at this year's Melbourne Food and Wine Festival and inducted into the hall of fame. For more than 45 years the Snaiths have bred belted Galloways at their Clonbinane property, producing 100 per cent grass-fed, dry-aged beef renowned for its flavour and marbling. Their paddock-to-plate philosophy and dedication to quality has already earned national acclaim, and this latest honour is a proud moment for Clonbinane and the Euroa electorate.

Live to the Max

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (09:44): I want to acknowledge the work of Tamara and Ben McKenzie in honouring the memory of their son Max by establishing Live to the Max. Tragically, 15-year-old Max McKenzie died in August 2021 after unknowingly eating food containing walnuts. Live to the Max is a campaign focused on raising awareness and equipping young people with the information and tools they need to support their mates and loved ones with food allergies. Live to the Max aims to increase knowledge of food allergies, empower young Victorians with information to recognise food allergies and know how to respond and raise awareness of food allergies among secondary school aged kids by hosting Live to the Max Day in August at their school. Information and resources to help plan the day are all available online.

Patricia Kaye

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (09:45): Half a century ago a group of Gisborne locals recognised the urgent need for an ambulance branch in their town, and at the heart of this story is Patricia Kaye, one of the founding members and still serving as treasurer today. It was a great honour to be able to join Trish, the CEO of Ambulance Victoria Jordan Emery and local paramedics to celebrate her great contribution. She was presented with flowers and a certificate of appreciation. On behalf of the community of Macedon, I thank the Gisborne ambulance auxiliary and especially Patricia for 50 years of extraordinary service to our community.

Mornington electorate homelessness

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (09:45): As Shadow Assistant Minister for Housing and Rental Affordability and the member for Mornington, I rise to speak about the worsening Mornington Peninsula homelessness crisis. Disturbingly, our region on the peninsula has the highest number of people experiencing homelessness now across Victoria. Many are women, young people and those over 55. There is only one limited crisis accommodation on the peninsula. With inadequate public transport, it is unrealistic for people in crisis to access services outside our community. This has been raised continually by the Southern Women's Action Network, SWAN, who I met with in Parliament yesterday along with my colleague the Shadow Minister for Housing. New national research has again exposed the shocking scale of child and youth homelessness. More than 13,000 Australian children aged 12 to 17 sought help on their own last year, and three-quarters remained homeless even after support ended. Groups like Fusion Mornington Peninsula do a great job in this area, but there is insufficient funding for them and for the support that is needed. Even more devastating, more than 500 children have died in the past decade after seeking homelessness services. That is around one child every single week. Locally, the housing crisis is biting hard. We need significant investment in this area not only on the Mornington Peninsula but across Victoria.

John Bates

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance) (09:47): I rise to recognise the extraordinary contribution of John Bates, a VICSES volunteer whose dedication and leadership has been truly exemplary. His 24 years of service to the organisation,

including eight and a half years as a unit controller for the SES Essendon unit, have made a profound and lasting impact on both his unit and the wider community. John's longstanding commitment is a testament to his character and unwavering belief in public service. As unit controller he has proven to be a strategic and forward-thinking leader. His most significant achievement was his foresight in building a robust water rescue capability within the unit, and this initiative, which he championed and developed long before it was needed, proved to be a critical asset. This capability was never more valuable than during the devastating Maribyrnong River flood in 2022. As the onsite incident controller, John's calm and decisive leadership was instrumental in directing critical rescue operations and managing the complex, rapidly evolving situation. The Essendon's unit's specialised water rescue skills, honed under his guidance, were essential in ensuring the safety of countless residents during that crisis. John has since continued his tireless work actively participating in flood rescue deployments across Victoria and dedicating his time to community meetings and awareness campaigns in the Maribyrnong Valley to help prepare for future events. Throughout his tenure John has held multiple roles within the Essendon unit, earning the deep respect of his peers and those at the highest levels of the SES. He is a valued mentor and respected professional, embodying the core values of the organisation. His dedication was formally recognised with an SES 20-year long service medal and a National Medal, but his true legacy lies in the safety he has helped ensure and the lives he has helped protect.

Waste and recycling management

Tim READ (Brunswick) (09:48): I wonder if the Victorian Labor government have looked at their own circular economy policies lately, because I have, and what they have put down on paper is not quite the same as what they are doing in the real world. When we think about waste, we often think about what is in our bins at home, and while we should certainly try to reduce our own waste, a lot of the waste we carefully sort into our different coloured bins was not created by us. Were saddled with it by companies who do not care what happens to their packaging once it reaches us. Victoria's principle of waste management hierarchy states that it is better to avoid generating waste than to manage its consequences. I agree. So you would think that the government would follow its own hierarchy and support all of us to avoid and reuse, before recycling and recovery even come into it. But while South Australia continues to take active steps to ban unnecessary single-use plastics, Victorian Labor seems to have stalled on any attempts to actually stop waste at the source, instead forging ahead with its unpopular and backwards plan to make Victoria the incinerator capital of Australia. It is almost as if they are abandoning the waste hierarchy just to make sure there is enough rubbish to feed these incinerators for decades to come.

Australian Islamic Centre College

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (09:50): Last Thursday I had a wonderful opportunity to go and tour the Australian Islamic Centre College in Newport alongside the Deputy Premier Ben Carroll. The deputy mayor Rayane Hawli also joined us, and we met with the principal Majida Ali and the head of discipline and wellbeing Azzam Rafei, along with members of the board, including Bachar Houli, who showed us the lovely, lovely campus there. We were there to announce a \$2.5 million grant for the college, which is part of a \$10.6 million grant to upgrade Islamic schools across the state. This grant will add seven new classrooms, a boardroom and a staffroom to this wonderful school and congratulations go to all involved in that.

Williamstown High School

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (09:50): On top of that I also dropped in to Williamstown High to their Pasco Street campus to see the work that is being undertaken at the historic Q block. The staffrooms have been completely refitted, as have the art rooms, and work is still underway to restore more classrooms and bathroom facilities. Well done to the executive principal Gino Catalano and

principal Daniel Pearce for managing to deliver those excellent education outcomes while managing the building works.

Ian Guild

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (09:51): On a sadder note the Williamstown ALP branch recently lost a local stalwart Ian Guild. He was a long-term Labor member, and my condolences go to Marcia and their children.

Community safety

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (09:51): This statement condemns the Allan state Labor government for its failure to address the escalating, out-of-control crime crisis across Victoria, particularly the increasing violent and brazen youth crime spree involving aggravated burglaries, home invasions, machete attacks, carjackings, armed hold-ups, thefts and firebombings. Victorians are simply sick and tired of constantly living in fear in their own homes and in fear of being the next victim. Almost on a daily basis we awake to a report of yet another violent machete attack, another home invasion or another carjacking. We have a state Labor government that has prevailed over a growing crime crisis, perhaps the worst since the current crime stats began. Yet it has allowed police numbers to collapse, with Victoria Police now close to 2000 members under strength, with 1100 vacancies, around 700 off on WorkCover and another 200 off on long-term sick leave. Despite some tinkering at the edges Victoria's bail laws are still weaker than when the Liberals and Nationals were in government. The Allan Labor government has failed to keep Victorians safe at home, on the streets and in their communities. Victorians deserve so much better.

Sydenham electorate infrastructure

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women) (09:53): Great things are happening across Sydenham. The new Calder Park Drive bridge is now open, as we removed Melbourne's 87th dangerous level crossing, making the Sunbury line level crossing free, improving safety and keeping traffic moving across the north-west. On the Melton Highway duplication works are underway between Crown Drive and The Regency, and the project, along with the Leakes Road intersection upgrade, will reduce delays for up to 23,000 vehicles every single day. At Watergardens station we are delivering better parking for commuters by delivering 485 new car parks in addition to the 95 that have already been delivered on Sydenham Road. More bays, improved lighting, CCTV, bike paths, parking and landscaping are making it easier and safer to find a park. We are also investing in our local schools. Mackellar Primary School secured \$500,000 to refurbish their student toilets, and some of that work and planning is underway, and at Sydenham-Hillside Primary School the \$9.2 million refurbishments are well underway. These projects on roads, parking and schools are real improvements that will ease congestion, boost safety and create more opportunities for families to learn, work and play locally.

Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (09:54): This past week the community have started to receive their rates notices, and my office has been inundated with residents shocked at the significant increase of the emergency services tax. In some cases people are paying more for the emergency services tax than the rates themselves, with some experiencing a doubling of their bill, an increase that they simply cannot afford. Farmers have a one-year reprieve, but many are already distressed by the reality of a 150 per cent increase that they will receive in 12 months time. This is a tax grab hitting regional communities the hardest by ripping millions of dollars out of households and communities, with no regard for cost-of-living pressures already impacting on households. Many families are already struggling with rising rates, insurance, fuel and grocery bills. A mother said to me recently she was

struggling to pay for her children's sporting fees. We are also seeing people struggling who have not in the past.

I have visited many of our local support services recently and they are all saying the same thing: that there is a significant increase in the demand for their support. A shout-out to Melanie at South Shepparton community house, who is doing an amazing job with her team, providing food relief and a range of support services. A shout-out also to Deb and her team at GV Pregnancy Support, who I visited just last week to thank Dawn Tricarico, who is now retiring, for her 15 years of volunteering service. Both of these service providers are calling for more funding due to the increasing demand that they are struggling to meet. We are seeing significant increases in the demand for support services because life just keeps getting harder under the Allan Labor government.

State Emergency Service Craigieburn unit

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (09:56): I rise to acknowledge the outstanding work by the VICSES Craigieburn unit in my electorate. It was terrific to have the Minister for Emergency Services join me recently to visit the SES. It was a great opportunity to thank the volunteers who support our community, particularly during the most difficult times and events. Of course you cannot visit the Craigieburn SES without a tour, led by life member Alan Penaluna, of the VICSES Craigieburn museum. The museum collection includes a range of documents, photographs and equipment from the very early days of civil defence, particularly the threat of nuclear conflict, with Geiger counters, radiation calculators, maps of fallout zones and much more. The collection also reflects the changes over the decades in the communications and road rescue equipment used by the SES.

Unit controller Omar Sayegh and the team are well respected and highly skilled, and they carry forward an ethos that has been embedded over many years since the unit formed in 1981. It is testament to this terrific culture that a number of members have been with the SES for decades. The close-knit nature of the unit was on show earlier this year when Paul and Emily Ledwich were presented with life membership. They were unable to attend the unit, so the unit arranged to go to them and held a ceremony in their driveway. The photos of the many unit members and neighbours showed the pride and significance of this well-deserved recognition. Congratulations to Paul and Emily and thank you to all involved at the Craigieburn SES. Our community is grateful for your service.

Early childhood education and care

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (09:57): Last week I met with Hawthorn West sessional kindergarten, and I thank Jess, Tess, Hillary and Meredith for their time. The Best Start, Best Life program, which the government introduced a few years ago, was intended to provide free kinder. It is a very important program and one we certainly support, but it is having some unintended consequences for part of the sector. For sessional kinders the risk they face and the challenges they are trying to overcome involve maintaining programs and building programs with increasing demand but being unable to meet that because of the restrictions around the way they are funded. The Hawthorn West sessional kinder that I visited last week is only one of a number in my electorate, and they have asked me on their behalf to raise with the government – and I am doing so now – whether there can be more flexibility in the way the government applies the program. Sessional kinder is not just a few hours of care, sessional kinder is a crucial part of the early education of children in our community. I urge the Allan Labor government to listen to the sessional kinder sector and understand their concerns. One of the most important things they provide, in addition to important early education, is choice for families, and I hope the government will heed this message.

Diamond Valley Little Athletics Centre

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Creative Industries) (09:59): I rise today to recognise the Diamond Valley Little Athletics Centre and to celebrate the outstanding contribution this organisation makes to my community. Steve Burgess,

president of the centre, has dedicated some 19 years of service to Little Athletics at both club and centre level. His journey began when he stepped up as a volunteer coach for On Track, which is the program for 5- to 7-year-olds at Little Aths. Since then he has been a constant presence, fostering a culture built on the Little Athletics motto, 'Family, fun and fitness'. Diamond Valley is fortunate to have an exceptional team of volunteers, including life members who remain actively engaged. Among them are Lesley Bell, who is been the club's chief timekeeper for an incredible 40 years, and Patrick Finlayson, who has served as an official starter for some 30 years. Both have been formally recognised for their service by Little Athletics Victoria. Their dedication, along with that of many other volunteers at the Little Athletics centre, ensures that each meet runs smoothly and that every child can enjoy fair, well-organised competition. Founded in 1967, the Diamond Valley centre is now preparing to embark on its 59th season in September, with more than 500 registered athletes aged from under six to under-17. It is already looking forward to celebrating its 60th anniversary, a milestone that will no doubt be a fitting tribute to decades of sporting achievement and community spirit. I thank Steve Burgess, the life members and all the volunteers at Diamond Valley Little Athletics for their commitment to our community.

Victoria Police deaths

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (10:00): On behalf of the people of Nepean I want to honour the memory of Detective Leading Senior Constable Neal Thompson and Senior Constable Vadim De Waart, who tragically lost their lives in the line of duty at Porepunkah. Their passing is a devastating reminder of the dangers faced by the men and women of Victoria Police every single day. They put themselves in harm's way so that we can live safely in our homes and communities. To the families of Detective Thompson and Senior Constable De Waart I extend my deepest sympathies – their sacrifice will never be forgotten – and to the community of Porepunkah, who are already grieving: we stand with you in sorrow.

This tragedy also speaks to the bravery and dedication of every member of Victoria Police. These officers serve our state with courage and professionalism, often in the most difficult of circumstances, and every person in this state owes them not only our gratitude but our respect and ongoing support. So, on behalf of my community I pay tribute to Detective Leading Senior Constable Neal Thompson and Senior Constable Vadim De Waart, and I reaffirm my support for all members of Victoria Police, who continue to protect us every day.

Ramesh Chandra Hari Guduru

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (10:01): My community has lost a very special person, Ramesh Chandra Hari Guduru. Dear Hari passed away on Sunday 10 August 2025. I first met Hari when he was president of the Hindu Society of Victoria and leading the volunteer management and operation of the Shri Shiva Vishnu Temple in Carrum Downs. His dedication and expertise were instrumental in expanding the reach of the Hindu Society to Hindu members and devotees and, equally importantly, the broader community.

Hari served the Hindu Society in many roles, receiving the multicultural award for excellence during his tenure as vice-president. He embodied community harmony, promoting and fostering cross-cultural and community connections and breaking down barriers, and was always willing to generously give his time and service. Commitment to community was evident in everything he did, and all in his quietly spoken and deeply respectful way. He was such a great communicator and an effective ambassador for promoting educational and cultural programs to the broader community.

Hari was deeply loved and will be sadly missed. We must remember the valuable lessons he taught us. He was so proud of his heritage and equally proud of his Victoria for all the opportunities our wonderful state and its people provide. Thank you, Hari, for your years of service. On a personal note, Hari was like family to me. I will miss him dearly. My deepest condolences to his beautiful, loving wife Latha, his son Sushant and their family and friends.

Montmorency Secondary College

[NAMES AWAITING VERIFICATION]

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (10:03): I would like to give a huge shout-out to the fantastic cast of *In Your Dreams* from Montmorency Secondary College. They were amazing. We had Archie Deylen, Ella Garavik, Mila Van Wyk, Izzie Milkins, Molly Saunders, Hiroki Williams, Gabby Charman, Rosemary Vescio, Indi Cuthbert-Novak, Imogen Breen, Gene Kitchen and his perfect comedic timing, Gordon Butler, Romi Rudinsky, Sophie Vivian, Ira Collings, Bianca Wallace, Lara McLeod, Ciara Camilleri, Ivy Campbell, Mae Butterworth, Gabe Mitchell, Kelsey Henderson, Thea Stanborough, Mika the dog, Sutton Arrow, Loki Benjamin, Ivy Campbell, Charlotte Cassidy, Kieran Connolly, Lily Gharavi, Jemima Gross, Kelsey Henderson, Hugh Maggs, Matilda McLeod, Lara McLeod, Ellie McMann, Grace Nihill, Lou Naught, Ruby Peel, Rhys Point, Mazoe Russell, Essie Sinclair, Brooke Skipper, Isla Stone, Erin Taylor, Lily Thompson, Ella Todd, Armin Van Wyk, Maddy Vecchiarelli, Bianca Wallace, Eva Way, Mickey Austin, Maya Burton, Mietta Cook, Mackenzie Dahlstrom, Eliza Glover, Wobie Glover, Emily Hall, Hayley Hoskins, Zuku Kagriekis, Olivia Lochland, Ava Longan, Mia Longan, Sienna Morgan, Annabel Nates, Sophie Nihill, Reeve Morgan, Amy Sargent, Jules Shaw, Amelia Smith, Ellie Stacey, Leah Taylor, Michaela Triano, Evie Rose, Stevie Rose Vella, Abigail Veerhuis, Annika White, Osher Woodmans, Rainier Zimmerman and, in the orchestra, Ethan Angelo, Sophie Baldwin, Aisha Bella, Craig Harrison, Matthew Layton, Jonah LeGrys, Eric Lee, Paige Lee, Rohan Loveland, Zoe McKee, Jude Mitchell, Sia Norn and Joel Stewart.

Scarred

[NAMES AWAITING VERIFICATION]

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (10:04): This past weekend marked 18 months since the Bayindeen bushfires tore through our region. On Sunday I joined hundreds of locals at Cave Hill Creek to mark the occasion with the launch of a new book called *Scarred*. Written by Hugh Carroll, the book tells the stories of bravery, loss, endurance and recovery felt by so many local families in Raglan, Mount Cole, Beaufort, Warrak, Buangor, Elmhurst, Mount Lonarch, Amphitheatre and beyond. It was a beautiful occasion celebrating community spirit and the power of people caring for one another through tragedy. Thank you to Tim and Ange Chandler for hosting and to all Bayindeen–Mount Cole fire book committee members for their contributions, including Rod McErvale, Rob Pelletier and Pat Smith. The book is one for the history books and will help so many on the road to recovery.

Country Fire Authority Raglan and Avoca brigades

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (10:05): It was also really special this past weekend to join the Minister for Emergency Services at the Raglan and Avoca fire stations to catch up with CFA members and celebrate their new vehicles. The 53 volunteers at the Avoca brigade now have a new heavy tanker that they are absolutely loving, and the 48 volunteers at Raglan have recently received a new light tanker from the state Labor government to help with call-outs across their CFA group and beyond. Both brigades are full of incredible local men and women who protect our region each and every day. I congratulate them on their new tankers and look forward to working with them to deliver even more support in the future.

Parkside Junior Football Club

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (10:06): Last week I had the absolute delight of attending the Parkside Junior Football Club's volunteer night at Pitcher Park in Alphington. It was a fantastic evening reflecting on the year and awarding the many people who make the club such a vibrant part of our community. We heard about the coaches and committee members, life members and the volunteers who put their heart into the club and make it such a valuable part of our kids' lives. I want to thank club president Rob Spurr and vice-president Jo Di Ciero for inviting both me and deputy mayor of Darebin Emily Dimitriadis to celebrate with them. Congratulations to new life members

Matt Honey, Jodie Palmer and Nik Devidas, as well as Amy Yacoub for the Spirit of Parkside Award. We were also able to share the news that Darebin council has committed \$500,000 to upgrading the ground at Pitcher Park, adding to the Victorian Labor government's \$100,000 commitment for new coaches boxes. Together we are working to give Parkside the facilities they deserve, and I wish the under-16s and under-12s every success in their grand finals this weekend.

Northcote festival

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (10:07): I also want to congratulate the Holy Monastery of Axion Estin for the incredible Northcote festival they hosted this Sunday, which I attended. This wonderful celebration brought together people from all walks of life for dancing, food, rides and stalls, showcasing Northcote's diversity and multiculturalism and multifaith spirit at its very best. My heartfelt thanks to Bishop Evmenios, Father Phillip and all involved for making it such a great success.

Endeavour Hills and Narre Warren police stations

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:07): I would like to take this opportunity to send my heartfelt condolences, my love and my thoughts to all the police in Victoria, especially to my incredible police force at Endeavour Hills and Narre Warren. They are incredible people. Endeavour Hills is led by the incredible Senior Sergeant Alan Dew, who I have had correspondence with over the last 24 hours. I just want to say that our thoughts and love are with you all during this extremely difficult time and thank you for the amazing job you do.

Point Cook community hospital

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (10:08): Residents of the Point Cook community will be very excited. Point Cook community hospital has begun. The hoardings are up, and the diggers are onsite. Thank you to the community for your patience – it is very appreciated.

Bills

Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Steve Dimopoulos:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (10:08): On behalf of the Liberals and Nationals I rise to make a contribution on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. On this side of the house we also recognise the value of the Formula One Australian Grand Prix to Victoria, economically, culturally and symbolically. But that support does not mean a blank cheque should be written for government when it comes to extra regulation, and there are certain parts of this bill we have serious reservations about, including the proposal to extend the race period from seven to 21 days. On this side we are going to have a balanced approach to the way we approach this bill. As I said, we acknowledge the grand prix is one of Melbourne's great international events, but we also need to make sure we are standing up for the everyday users of Albert Park – the joggers, the rowers, the golfers, the school students that come through there, the commuters who use it as a thoroughfare to get to work and the local businesses whose lives are disrupted by this event each year. On this side we believe they are just as entitled to consideration from government departments, from the government and from the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) as both the departments and the race organisers.

Before we get into the details of the bill I think it is worth revisiting a little bit of history on the grand prix here in Melbourne. I know everyone on that side will stand and speak about what a great this event this is, but let us not forget how the event came to Melbourne. I think it is important that it was the vision and determination of a Liberal government that brought the Formula One Grand Prix here to Melbourne.

Luba Grigorovitch interjected.

Sam GROTH: It was former Premier Jeffrey Kennett. We can argue about this one, but it was. I am amazed it has become controversial this early on. I did not even get 2 minutes into my speech. We do not like history in this chamber. In the early 1990s Adelaide's contract to host the grand prix was approaching its end. South Australia had hosted the event from 1985, but questions were growing about the event's long-term viability in that city. It was former Premier Jeffrey Kennett, I am not afraid to say it, who saw an opportunity. He recognised that Melbourne with its world-class sporting infrastructure, its cultural vibrancy and its international reputation could and should host the Formula One. They moved decisively and in 1993 secured a contract with Formula One management, led by Bernie Ecclestone, to bring the race to Melbourne from 1996 onwards.

Gabrielle Williams interjected.

Sam GROTH: Come on, do not take it there. We are talking about a bipartisan event we all love. We do not need to go to the gutter, Minister. There were protests in Albert Park at the time about disruptions to the parklands, and there were many critics who said the event would never be embraced in this city. I think we can all stand here and say that has certainly not been the case. The first Melbourne race in 1996 was an incredible success. Crowds flocked to Albert Park. The world's cameras broadcast Melbourne's skyline, the lake and the vibrancy of the city, as they still do today. The grand prix immediately embedded itself as a fixture of Melbourne's major event calendar, and I will say I am glad it still remains a part of that calendar. Personally I am a big supporter of this event, and for those that do not know – unfortunately it was during the 2020 year – I was actually the ambassador for that event prior to coming into this place. How is this? I was an ambassador for the event. I will say one of the perks of being an ambassador for the event is that you get to ride around in a two-seat Formula One car, and unfortunately for me, I did not fit. I was very upset. I had to do a lap in the safety car instead. I was incredibly disappointed, I must say, that the event was cancelled during those COVID years, but I am glad to see it is back. Melbourne has hosted the race every year beside those –

Luba Grigorovitch interjected.

Sam GROTH: It is a nice thing to have some personal attachment. I will say it is great to see the crowds back exceeding 450,000, and this race does deliver billions of dollars in economic benefit. It fills our hotels and restaurants, has cemented its place in the calendar and again will be race 1 as we come into next year. I think it is also important to mention that Liberal governments have delivered many of Victoria's major events.

Gabrielle Williams interjected.

Sam GROTH: Why can't we make this bipartisan? I would say major events in this state have been for a long time, and if you speak to all of these –

Luba Grigorovitch: All thanks to you guys?

Sam GROTH: I literally just said 'bipartisan'. It has been all sides of this house that have supported major events for a long period of time, and I think it is important that we acknowledge that. Starting with the grand prix, which came here, and the Australian Open, for a long time there has been investment into Melbourne and Olympic Parks by both sides of this house. The Spring Racing Carnival is another event that has had support from both sides of the house, including the Liberals. It was the Kennett government who started our cultural major events program through the 1990s and also delivered the expansion of the arts centre. We can sit here and chirp, but it has been a bipartisan approach. I know members on the other side will take credit for every part of that, but I am happy to stand here and say that our major events calendar has had input from all sides of the house and needs to continue to have all sides, all political parties, supporting the future of that.

The grand prix is not just a race. We know it is a big driver of Victoria's economy. It contributed a huge amount to gross state product and returned \$3 for every \$1 investment by the current government, and I give them credit for that. But that should not diminish concerns about the growing reliance of the event on taxpayer subsidies and payments from the government in terms of the loss of the event, and I have raised this directly with the minister, with the minister's staff and the department and with the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, who I thank for being involved in the briefings on this. They know that is a concern that I have continued to raise since I have held this portfolio, since I came into this place, that we should be better leveraging our major events 365 days a year to make sure the burden on the taxpayers of Victoria is reduced as much as possible.

We have seen in recent years that tax burden, or the payment from government, continue to go up to subsidise the grand prix. It sat at \$102 million last year, just over \$100 million the year before and \$78 million the year before that. It has gone up dramatically in recent years. Even though the event has expanded, you would hope with the expanding numbers and ticket sales coming through the gate that there would be more reliance on bringing down that burden on the Victorian taxpayer and on government payments.

The grand prix supports more than 1600 full-time equivalent jobs across construction, hospitality, tourism, transport and event logistics and fills our hotel rooms, and it carries immense intangible benefits. It sends Melbourne and Victoria out to the world. We have seen how, with things like *Drive to Survive* bringing in a whole new audience, it gives an opportunity to sell Melbourne. These, I say, are all positive things. I am not going to stand up here and bag everything that goes on. I think that would be wrong to do.

Things like securing the long-term certainty of the race are great – it is another good thing for Melbourne – but I think we also need to look at some of the provisions that have been put into the extension of that contract. I refer to an article in the *Age* from 18 November 2023, written by Chip Le Grand, which goes into some of those contract negotiations. The article states:

Under a previously undisclosed provision within Victoria's contract extension to keep the Australian Grand Prix, the state has agreed to meet the cost of new or substantially refurbished corporate hospitality facilities ...

That will be a \$350 million-plus investment in the new pit building. To get that extension – tickets to the Paddock Club previously have sat around \$6000 per head and contributed \$12 million to the bottom line of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation – the expanded Paddock Club is due to be completed and the contractual change will come into force. But it also means that \$30 million of the revenue will go back now to Liberty Media and leave an even bigger hole to be filled by the government when it comes to the cost being imposed on the Victorian taxpayer.

We know the new terms were reached by the former Premier Daniel Andrews after he personally took over the negotiations from the then AGPC chairman Paul Little and chief executive Andrew Westacott. He sidelined the people he had put in place to make these negotiations to do it himself, and I think there are many people that question whether signing the most profitable part of the race away to a company that makes upwards of \$12 billion a year, in Liberty Media, is in the best interests of Victorians. It also rescinded a long-term commercial right enjoyed by the Australian Grand Prix, a revenue stream that contributed to 16 per cent of total sales take. It is going to be interesting over time to see what the long-term effect of giving up that revenue source is going to be.

When it comes to the grand prix – and this may be because of having to plug that \$30 million black hole because of the Paddock Club – once again this year we will see a surge in ticketing prices for the event. We understand the huge numbers coming through with international visitation and interstate visitation, but we also want to make sure – just as events like the Australian Open have done with some of their ground pass tickets, their after-5 access and other pieces for children – that these events still remain incredibly accessible to Victorians. This also needs to remain a Victorian event for Victorians, even though it is showcasing us on the global scale. When you look at the ticket prices and some of the increases this year alone, a four-day general admission ticket rose by 24 per cent, and over

the past five years the general admission ticket has risen by over 100 per cent. I think there would be some Victorians who want to have access to the race, who are big fans of F1 and motorsport, and who want to make sure this event is still accessible to them whilst understanding that global major events ticket pricing is continuing to rise. I would encourage the government to work with the AGPC to find a way to make the event continually accessible for Victorians as well as those people coming in from interstate. For example, with some of the ticketing prices, the Fangio Grandstand has seen a \$245 increase since 2024. I am happy to table some of these numbers for the house.

In the end, more people through the gates is fantastic, but please do everything you can to make it accessible. It is something we would encourage the government to do. The fact that we also support the grand prix does not mean we accept every piece of regulation that the government attaches to it, and I think I have been very clear with the minister's office, the department and the AGPC about some of our concerns around this bill. I will go through a quick overview before I touch on some of those.

The bill proposes a suite of amendments to the act, and they include extending the race period from seven to up to 21 days; allowing the AGPC to host non-motorsport events with ministerial approval; and introducing public access areas which can be declared, varied or closed by the AGPC with ministerial approval. The bill doubles the contribution to Parks Victoria from \$100,000 to \$200,000. There is an updating of the definition of 'grand prix insignia' and a strengthening of the protections around that, and the bill also shifts acting appointments to the AGPC board from the Governor in Council to the minister. And there are some other minor governance and consequential amendments.

On this side, the opposition will support some of these changes, such as updating the provisions. We think the increase in the Parks Victoria contribution is a good thing. But as I have raised in some of the briefings, I would hope that goes back to remediating the site for those community groups, for the users of the park. We want to make sure it is not just a payment for necessarily staffing or for bureaucrats. We want to make sure it is having a direct impact back on Albert Park.

But the thing that we are struggling with is clause 22, which is the tripling of, or up to a tripling of, that race period. Clause 22 increases the maximum race period from seven to up to 21 days, and this would allow the AGPC to take exclusive control of Albert Park for three weeks each year. I look forward to the member for Albert Park making a contribution on what her local community may be feeling about this, because the feelings and the contributions coming back to this side of the house have been fairly strong from some of those groups – and I will go into some of those soon. But look, this is not a minor administrative change; it represents a profound shift in how Albert Park will be managed for decades.

I understand the race is growing, and I have had this conversation with both the AGPC and the department. The race period has been seven days for decades. Construction and dismantle works have always extended beyond those seven days, but the formal lockout of the community has been limited. I know the bill says up to three weeks, but I think we all know that that will probably be used as much as needed, and I think the concern of those communities is it will be the 21 days. It might not seem like much, but the impact on local users would be immense. For three weeks each year the sailing and rowing clubs will be locked out of the lake. The golfers will lose their course for an extended period of time, more than they already do. Schools will possibly lose classrooms. There are sporting facilities they will lose. Commuters – this is probably one that I am not sure has been mentioned – would also be forced onto things like the busy Queens Road to make their possible cycling commute in amongst traffic. So while this provision is being used as a safety measure, I think there are other safety measures that may not quite have been taken into consideration. And of course residents will also be denied access to their local park.

The government has argued that the extension is necessary for safety, and we have had considerable conversations on this matter. They cite WorkSafe concerns that cranes operate on public roads while pedestrians and cyclists pass nearby, that fans trespass into construction zones for selfies and that vandalism has occurred. It is true, no doubt; it is a huge operation. We are talking about putting a

racetrack onto a park. This is a public park that has to be built on each year to be able to facilitate this race. There are trucks and there are contractors that move into the park. It is the largest temporary street circuit in the world. So there is no dispute on this side of the house that safety is important, but for us, the striking thing is the absence of the evidence that has been provided. We have made repeated requests to the government and to the AGPC about providing concrete examples of accidents that have happened during the existing seven-day race period that have caused serious harm to members of the public. Instead we have had incidents cited involving trespassing, vandalism and unauthorised gatherings. These problems exist regardless of whether the declared period is seven or 21 days, because I am pretty sure those vandals do not check the *Government Gazette* to find out when it is closed and trespassers do not respect legislative definitions.

We still remain totally unconvinced of the necessity or benefit related to the extension of the race period, and on this side of the house we do not believe in regulation for the sake of regulation and we do not believe in locking out communities for the convenience of a corporation or the government. So I encourage the minister's office and the department to come up with some of those things. We have asked again. We are going to have 10 days before this heads to the Council, but if we cannot get the concrete evidence of the safety, necessity and the related benefits, we will seek to work with the crossbench in the other place to remove the proposed extension from the bill. So I give you notice that it is the intention of this side of the house to work to have that clause amended back to seven days unless we can get that concrete evidence.

The bill also expands the AGPC's legal power at the expense of community access without providing the evidence that it makes anyone safer. As I mentioned, for many residents it will actually make their lives less safe. To use an example, I was contacted by Wendy Pakes. Wendy is a local resident who cycles through Albert Park each day as she commutes to her workplace in Carlton. She is in her 60s. She has explained that during the current build and dismantle period, when sections of the park are closed, she is forced to divert onto major roads. In her words:

My usually pleasant and safe ride becomes one of dodging cars on major roads, at peak period. As a woman in my 60s, I already take about 20 minutes longer for my commute to avoid traffic.

Wendy also went on to say:

I am horrified at the suggestion that the AGPC wants to extend the time of park closure to three weeks. This is a public park. The amenity of the park should not be reduced to gratify large corporate organisations.

For Wendy the extension is not a safety measure; it is completely the opposite. It forces her into heavier traffic for a longer period of time, and it exposes her to greater danger. I think there is a little bit of irony in the bill that, justified on public safety grounds, it may in practice make things more dangerous for the very people that it displaces.

I have also had a lot of community consultation and feedback from sporting clubs. The Albert Park Women's Golf Club wrote:

Our club has been playing at the park for over 72 years. The effects of the Grand Prix already have a negative impact on our enjoyment of our sport. These amendments ... make it worse.

The golf course is currently closed to us for three to four weeks to facilitate the build of infrastructure prior to the race and then its removal after the race. But the negative effects of this work are felt before and well after these closure dates.

Not only are the club is concerned about the inconvenience and about wellbeing, but they believe it will significantly and negatively impact their physical, financial and general wellbeing:

These concerns go far beyond inconvenience – they affect our physical health, financial well-being ... social connections, and the long-term sustainability of Albert Park as a ... shared public asset.

We have also had concerns from rowing and sailing clubs facing the prospect of losing the lake for three weeks at their peak season. I have a letter from the Albert Sailing Club, which I am happy to quote from. They have sought special arrangements in regard to accessing their clubrooms and

parking. For 20-plus years they have been dealing with the lockout for a seven-day period, but the extension actually means that the club will suffer firm financial loss. They talk about the number of race days which they lose being incredibly more significant, so it is hard for them to quantify the financial figures lost. They can try to do it based on previous years. Previously they have been locked out for one weekend and five days total from using their facility. They will now lose up to three weekends and a number of race days during what is a fantastic time for Melbourne in that time of year with the weather, but access to the lake for an extended period of time would possibly disadvantage them in terms of gaining members and keeping members within that period during a time when they want to use it.

I also had feedback from the Lord Somers Camp and Power House. I was reached out to by a financial member and volunteer, someone who has been there for a long period of time. They have been with Lord Somers Camp for 14 years, and they said:

[QUOTE AWAITING VERIFICATION]

The bill creates concerns about access to Power House, which is primarily a community-based hub for a range of community programs, including the one I lead. It will also have potential impact on not-for-profit organisations, social enterprises and other revenue, and despite early conversations I understand have taken place with the government and the AGPC, I personally feel the Parliament needs to explore a more balanced outcome.

I think this is the feedback that seems to be coming through. I know the government opened up consultation for a couple of weeks, and I am sure they have, through Engage Victoria, read a lot of this feedback. It seems very, very consistent from the groups within that area – not everyone – that they accept to a degree that the grand prix is here to stay, absolutely, but they just want to feel like they are not losing access to their community facilities, which remain so important to them.

Residents and commuters are equally affected. Thousands use Albert Park each week to walk, to jog, to cycle and to walk their dogs. For three weeks those ordinary activities will be denied. Save Albert Park in their briefing described Albert Park as inner Melbourne's lung and lifeblood and argued that the government is treating it as nothing more than a racetrack and a corporate entertainment venue, and that is a feeling and perception they say is growing amongst residents. They feel that their park is being corporatised and their access subordinated to the convenience of AGPC and global companies. We can say that feedback was sought, but many of those community groups said that the two-week consultation period just was not enough for them to be able to speak to all of their members and actually weigh up what some of the financial implications and physical implications would be for those groups. 'Probably not enough consultation' is the feedback for the government in terms of what they are going to try to do to mitigate some of those circumstances.

The bill also introduces public access areas, supposedly to allow some of the parts of Albert Park to remain open during the race period. On paper it sounds like a bit of a safeguard to this provision, but in reality the safeguards are weak. AGPC can revoke or close public access areas with ministerial approval or for up to three days in an emergency simply by publishing a notice on a website. Critically, failure to publish online does not invalidate the closure. So while they are required to publish the closure, this does not actually mean, if they do not, that the closures do not happen. That means a resident could turn up at the park only to find the gate locked with no warning. There is no statutory requirement for signage, SMS alerts or direct tenant notification. We do not believe that is transparent. It is administrative convenience dressed up as public access.

This is something I have been strong on for quite some time and I have not been backwards in coming forwards on. We support the idea of AGPC hosting non-motorsport activities and events to leverage something like the Australian Grand Prix and the staff that they have. At the moment they are operating a four-day race period for the Formula One and a three-day race period for the MotoGP. The staff that they have and the expertise they have within that organisation – and I would say in a lot of our major sport organisations and major event organisations in Victoria – could be further utilised. A very good

example was given to me when I met recently, with the member for Polwarth, with people from the Cadel Evans road race. That is an event which receives some assistance from this government in terms of marketing and putting on staff and trying to activate that event each year. But there is an example of something that could possibly lean on some of the staff or the expertise within AGPC – they are already being paid; they are already on the books – to possibly try and reduce the burden on this government and on the taxpayer when it comes to a small event of that size. So I absolutely encourage the government to do everything it can to use the expertise in an organisation like the AGPC or any other organisations that may be available to it to offer support to some of those events in Victoria that are currently needing to be propped up. Anywhere we can try to find savings to maximise those events I think is a very, very good thing.

But I will also say if AGPC decides to go out and run other events outside of motorsport, we need to be cautious, because the commitment to the grand prix each year has become in excess of \$100 million in the budget on top of what the race revenue is, and we need to make sure that we do not further increase the burden on taxpayers by running extra events. So while we encourage those extra events to go ahead, we need to make sure there is proper oversight of those events and that they are truly commercial. We spruik the economic benefit to the state of people that spend when they come here for these events, but it has also got to reduce the burden on the budget. The economic benefit is fantastic for those local businesses – for our hotels, for our tourism and hospitality operators – but it also needs to reduce the burden on the budget. So we want to make sure that we see proper oversight, because we need to make sure that does reduce rather than increase that burden. I encourage the minister to do everything he can to make sure that when those events are put into the calendar and the AGPC does come forward with an idea it is going to actually reduce the burden on the taxpayer.

I have mentioned briefly the Parks Victoria contribution rising from \$100,000 to \$200,000 – it is welcome, but it is modest. We need to make sure, as the permanent tenant, Parks Victoria has that site and continues to remediate it and get the community assets in the park back to a state to be available for the community as quickly as possible, especially considering we are investing – well, the state is investing – \$350 million in that new pit building. We want to make sure that is also available as a public access point and delivers benefit to the people of Albert Park.

I just want to touch quickly on the human rights and charter issues. The statement of compatibility acknowledges the bill limits the charter right to freedom of movement. For up to 21 days now each year residents will be barred from a Crown land park reserved for public recreation. I know the government says it is justified on safety grounds, but as I have already mentioned, I believe it is hard to justify on safety grounds unless you can provide the evidence – and not anecdotal evidence of a near-miss of a forklift but actual evidence as to why this is needed. I continue to press the government and the department to try to get us that evidence before this bill goes to the Council. I cannot more strongly urge it: please get us that evidence.

There are some other small amendments. The bill allows the minister rather than the Governor in Council to appoint acting members and an acting chairperson of the board. While it is administratively efficient – it centralises power – we want to make sure that this does not increase the risk of politicisation of appointments and reduce the proper oversight in terms of those positions.

As I have said, we will not be opposing this bill here in the Assembly. We support the grand prix and we support some of the provisions. It does fix some of the issues that have been raised by AGPC and that have been raised by me in this portfolio over the last three years or so. I am a big grand prix fan, as are many of us on this side. Do not get us wrong; we love this event. But as I have said, we have grave concerns over the extension of the race period. We need that evidence on safety incidents. For us it looks like regulation for the sake of regulation and it risks harming community access and making life for some of those residents, like Wendy Pakes, less safe. And she is just one that reached out; I am sure it is the same for many.

I am sure I will get some barbs here as I say it – the grand prix is a Liberal legacy. It is something that this side of the house brought to Victoria. You can try to own it as much as you want – it was the Liberals who brought the event here. We will continue to support it. We will continue to make sure we defend it. We will continue to make sure it is done in the right way. And actually, while I have 1 minute, I was going to wrap up, but I just want to raise – and I am sure the government has done its research on this – that this year the Las Vegas Grand Prix is going to happen from 20 to 22 November. For context in terms of the race period lockdown: in the lead-up to the Las Vegas Grand Prix the strip sees overnight closures for weeks ahead while barriers and lighting go in, similar to what we do here. But come race week – understanding that the Las Vegas race period starts on a Thursday and finishes on a Saturday and is a little bit different to other weeks – their first full shutdown happens early on the Wednesday morning, from midnight to 6 am. Then from Thursday to Saturday the strip is locked down each night from 7 pm till around 2 to 4 am the next morning. So the overnight prep is done weeks before, but the full strip closures do not actually happen until literally days before the race. If it can be done in other areas, such as Las Vegas, which is incredibly busy, I encourage the government to look at how it can be done here in Victoria as well.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (10:38): Just a slight indulgence if I may: I want to extend my prayers, thoughts and condolences to all members of Victoria Police, particularly following the tragic deaths of Detective Leading Senior Constable Neal Thompson, Senior Constable Vadim De Waart and the entire Porepunkah community. I note the member for Ovens Valley is here too, so from my community to his, our thoughts and prayers are with you as they are with our Victoria Police members across Fawkner and Brunswick stations in my community. I would like to also extend the prayers and thoughts of my community to the Stonehaven community in Geelong following the terrible bus crash involving 28 primary school students.

I rise to speak in support of the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025, and in doing so I would like to firstly commend the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister Dimopoulos, and his team for bringing this bill to the chamber. I also commend the local member for the area, the member for Albert Park, for her work, particularly on the community side of things. And I am very pleased to say that I am the lead speaker on this side of the house. I have got pole position on this side of the house when it comes to speaking on this bill. I just want to acknowledge and commend the member for Nepean for taking his full 30 minutes as well on the bill. He completed the racetrack, he completed all the laps of the circuit, but I do not know if he came up as a McLaren finisher. I think he was more of a Haas finisher, bringing up the back of the line there. But he did a good job completing his full 58 laps.

Of course Victoria is the major events, tourism and cultural capital of Australia and the world and, as highlighted just in yesterday's *Herald Sun*, according to a national study for the Seasonal Experiences Index, Melbourne and regional Victoria remain among the top places for tourism this winter, with more international and interstate tourists continuing to visit Victoria, and Victoria experienced a 14 per cent growth in visitors in this period. It was the Mornington Peninsula, the member for Nepean's community, which experienced the highest levels of visitation with increases of 33 per cent, and that was driven by growth in spa and wellness experiences of 42 per cent and 34 per cent respectively. That also follows off the back of us as a government recently releasing a wellness tourism strategy just last week. The study also named Melbourne and Victoria as the standout locations for winter tourism, well ahead of Surfers Paradise, Cairns, Sydney, Port Douglas and the Blue Mountains.

This of course is no accident. Our tourism and visitor economy continues to grow and burgeon because of our ongoing investments into more events and experiences that continue to attract more people throughout the year that are anchored by of course the Australian Grand Prix – this very event that we are talking about through this bill – the Australian Open and the Melbourne flower and garden show as well. I just want to acknowledge the Melbourne flower and garden show and the nursery and garden industry, who are here in the building this week. They run the Southern Hemisphere's largest premier horticulture event, third in the world only behind Chelsea and Hampton in the UK, with

100,000 visitors annually coming here to Melbourne every year since the event's inception in 1995. The sector employs 24,000 people. It is worth \$2.5 billion to the state's economy, and I just want to acknowledge Craig Taberner, the CEO of Nursery & Garden Industry Victoria, and David Reid from the association as well, who is from my community. Of course it is also events through the National Gallery of Victoria, the AFL Grand Final weekend, the Spring Racing Carnival, the Boxing Day Test and so much more that continue to grow and support our visitor economy.

As highlighted by Minister Dimopoulos, as of March 2025 our visitor economy is now worth \$40 billion. It is one of our biggest economic drivers, with 288,000 jobs associated. The international travellers spend has hit \$9.3 billion, with record hotel bookings and nights recently in July off the back of the Wallabies and British Lions event, the *Lego Star Wars* event, Melbourne Winter Masterpieces, *French Impressionism* at the NGV, the *Frida Kahlo* exhibition and the international ballet at Hamer Hall, which I took my daughters to go and see recently. It was absolutely sensational, I have got to say – very impressive. And that all led to a 94.7 per cent hotel occupancy rate across the CBD, with 25,000 hotel rooms booked. It was the busiest ever June as well, with 870,700 hotel rooms booked across greater Melbourne and the busiest hotel season from the start of the year up until July. The Tourism Research Australia statistics of June 2025 also show and confirm Melbourne and Victoria as the top overnight destinations for interstate tourists, with 861,000 visitors, well outperforming Sydney. This, again, is because of our events calendar but also because of the infrastructure we have helped deliver and support over the years.

There have been record visits via Melbourne Airport, with 11.9 million international visitors over the 2024–25 financial year, 8.3 per cent growth, and January alone experienced 3.3 million visitors through the gates, which included 600,000 internationals. New flights have been secured from Hong Kong through Shenzhen Airlines as well. New hotels have opened in the last 12 months – the I Hotel, Melbourne Place, Lanson Place Parliament Gardens and the Adina in Pentridge, Coburg, of course. The total hotel room capacity is now at 65,500 across Victoria.

Of course a key anchor to that burgeoning visitor economy remains the Australian Grand Prix. The Australian Grands Prix Act 1994 has been in force for over 30 years. It empowers the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to hold the Formula One Grand Prix at Albert Park and the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix, the MotoGP, at Phillip Island. These annual events have been features of our major events calendar of course since 1996 and 97 respectively. The grand prix provides a significant contribution to the Victorian visitor economy, driving visitation spend and contributing to the vibrancy and livability of Victoria and promoting Melbourne and Victoria to a global audience. This year's event holds the record for the highest attendance weekend sporting event ever staged in Melbourne as of 2025. The grand prix increased Victoria's gross state product by \$323.9 million. It contributed at least \$268 million to our economy, and it generated an estimated \$3.08 in economic impact for the state for every dollar we invested as a government. It supports an estimated 1600 annual full-time equivalent direct jobs through roles such as event construction and hospitality.

This year record crowds – 465,000 fans – came to the event, which is a massive increase on the pre-COVID levels of 2019, of just 140,000 fans. It is a tremendous growth, and we have secured it here up until 2037.

The original Australian Grand Prix Act was created in 1994 and ensuring that it remains fit for purpose is essential. As the event grows in popularity the Australian Grand Prix Corporation is now setting up and dismantling the event outside of that seven-day race period, and as far as I am aware and understand, it is the biggest demountable racetrack precinct in the world. This means more construction workers and vehicles are operating in public areas beyond the race period as the event expands in terms of visitation experiences, and that potentially puts pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users at risk.

The proposed changes in this bill include extending the race period for parts of Albert Park from seven days up to 21 days while protecting public access, allowing essential works to be completed in a

controlled environment to create a safer and more secure park during the race period; increasing the annual payment to Parks Victoria, supporting the maintenance and upkeep of Albert Park, from 100,000 to \$200,000; and providing the opportunity to increase that compensation through regulation. It enables the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to host non-motorsport events, potentially bringing new and more exciting events to Victoria. It requires the AGPC to provide six months advance notice of a new proposed non-motorsport associated event, subject to ministerial approval. Other corporate intellectual property updates are also provided for in the legislation, including the capacity for the minister to appoint an acting chairperson. To help inform the implementation of the bill, a community consultation process is also going to be underway to help ensure Albert Park users and members of the local community are informed about these proposed amendments and how they can be best implemented. People can go to the engage.vic.gov.au website to have their say or reach out to their local member for Albert Park, I am sure.

Along with this bill we are also investing to deliver a new, modern and fit-for-purpose pit building for the grand prix to secure its future, with 14 garages and community access to spaces for sport and recreation outside the race period. Of course we are working to preserve and enhance the Australian F1 experience through this bill and through the investments that we are making. Again, I commend the member for Albert Park for her efforts throughout all of this process.

I acknowledge as well some of the concerns that were raised by the member for Nepean, noting that the opposition will not be opposing the bill but potentially will move amendments in the upper house. He referred to clause 22, around that seven-day to 21-day notice. My message to the member for Nepean is that this bill essentially is about safety – the safety of the community living in and around the precinct. He wanted to cite examples as to why we need to expand these provisions to make things safer. The first thing I would say to the member for Nepean is: why should it take a death or something serious to happen for safety to be improved? Point 2, which he appears to have forgotten, is that there already has been a death at Albert Park. In 2001 a race steward was killed in very tragic circumstances, and learnings were implemented from that following the coroner's report so that we can make sure it can never happen again. We need to do the same through this bill to make safety the priority for the community now as well.

I commend the member for Nepean in some respects too. He did not talk down our state's tourism economy like he usually does through his contributions, because he usually does sound like the shadow minister for tourism for Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales. He wanted to talk about contract negotiations around the grand prix. He went to the LIV Golf experience in Adelaide, let us not forget. He said to the media that he would negotiate to bring that event here to Victoria, and the very next day the South Australian Premier Peter Malinauskas announced a contract extension of the LIV Golf tournament to 2031.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:48): I will say it again, and I will say it any time I get the chance to talk about motorsport in this place: in Mildura we put food on your plate and champions on racetracks. Obviously the name of the bill is the Australian Grand Prix Amendment Bill 2025, but my electorate is, let us say, the centre of Australia when it comes to producing motorsport champions – although we have not been able to produce a grand prix driver. The one thing we lack is a road track, and I will get to government investment in motorsport on a broader level a little bit later on.

Let me begin by first saying what all Victorians know, and the member for Nepean pointed it out: the Australian Grand Prix is one of the jewels in our sporting calendar.

Members interjecting.

Jade BENHAM: There is a bit of conversation happening over there. It is quite distracting – no, it is not.

I am a huge motorsport fan. In fact the member for Frankston and I co-chair the parliamentary friends of the Australian Grand Prix and motorsport. That is how much of an enthusiast I am. The grand prix

does indeed place Melbourne and Victoria on the world stage. We heard from the member for Nepean about how much it does for the state's economy and that it is a legacy of the coalition government. But make no mistake, the road to Albert Park runs through Mildura. Do not think about that too hard. It is a metaphor. But let me talk about the pedigree that Mildura has produced. I could go back further, but I will go back to the 1980s. We could have a little pop quiz – you might know of a race car driver. V8s are more my discipline, motorbikes. I prefer two wheels to four wheels. But if we are going to talk about motorsport with four wheels, I do prefer a V8 supercar over Formula One but still enjoy the grand prix. Fun fact: in a former life I worked at the Australian Grand Prix as a –

A member interjected.

Jade BENHAM: I was not a grid girl, no. I was a cook for the security staff – fun fact. But I did it because I got a pass for the entire weekend of the grand prix, so it was worth cooking a few burgers for the security team. Going back to the Mildura pedigree in motorsport, a driver called Larry Perkins you may have heard of. How many Bathurst championships has he won? He has won six: three with the great Peter Brock, one with Russell Ingall and one with Gregg Hansford. Laz still actually lives out near Murrayville and farms out there. His son Jack is an enduro racer. I had the opportunity to catch up last week with Cam Waters, who is currently racing on the Tickford Racing team.

Gabrielle Williams interjected.

Jade BENHAM: You have had a moment with him? He gives most of the ladies that reaction – a bit short for me, but he is lovely. I will take a moment to shout out to Cam. He has just announced that he is going to be a father with his partner Brooke, so that is lovely. Surprisingly – because these motorsport enthusiasts are Mr Intensity – Cam has a little side hustle, a business in distilling whisky.

Gabrielle Williams interjected.

Jade BENHAM: Yes indeed. The Minister for Public and Active Transport might like to join me in my office later this afternoon. She can sample some Waters Whisky or buy it at waterswhisky.com – shameless plug. It is delightful. We had a little session with Cam and his cousin Josh. Josh is a four-time Australian Superbike champion, Mildura boy – runs a small business in Mildura still. He is racing at Phillip Island next weekend, in fact. I will take my husband there; as a wonderful birthday and Father's Day gift I will take him to watch who I want to watch on the Superbike. What a lucky husband.

Toby Hederics – let us talk about Toby. This is my kind of racing. He is an enduro motorcycle rider. He can do incredible things on a motorcycle. Toby last year – it might have been the year before – qualified for the Dakar Rally by being the fastest rookie at the Rallye du Maroc in Morocco. A ripping bloke from, again, a motorsport family, he ended up finishing as the second place rookie in the Dakar Rally earlier this year. Honestly, what kind of goal do you set after that? Rick and Todd Kelly are another couple of champions. Rick I think won one Supercars Championship. No, he won Bathurst twice – won the championship. He finished second another time when he was racing with his brother on the team, so there you go. Rick – again, the business acumen of these drivers – is currently constructing Trentham Waters, which is an amazing Palm Springs-style resort, so you will have to come and visit. I invite everyone, when it is finished eventually, to come and visit this amazing resort, but it is being built on the New South Wales side, because he could not get the planning permits and get around the red tape on the Victorian side. That should be open soon.

Darren Morgan is another one; he was a four-time Top Fuel racing champion. Phil Lamattina – let me tell you something about Phil Lamattina. He has won two Top Fuel racing championships. Who in this chamber has beaten two-time Top Fuel racer Phil Lamattina on a drag strip? The member for Mildura has beaten him twice in a Ford Ranger, and I will hang on to that for as long as I live, probably. And Leigh Adams was a world-class speedway rider who represented Australia all over the world in speedway and lives in Mildura, again, which is fabulous.

As you can see, motorsport is in Victoria's DNA, and in fact I would say it runs stronger through Mildura than it does through Albert Park for the 21 days around the grand prix. However, if the government is serious about supporting motorsport in this state, then it has to look beyond the CBD and beyond Albert Park. Champions like the ones I have just mentioned that come out of the Sunraysia region need support. Local clubs, grassroots clubs and members need support, and they need investment. Josh Waters has won – I will not say five, but he could win five this year, and he is 56 points ahead, touch wood. I am Italian, I am very superstitious – touch wood. He has won four. We do not have a road track in Mildura. This is a guy that has got two kids, a beautiful wife and runs a small business. Every time he needs to go and test a bike or practice, he has got to go to Sydney. It does not make sense. Like I said, we have not produced any Formula One racers – we do not have a road track. That is the kind of investment that I am talking about: if this government is serious about motorsport in Victoria and serious about growing it and growing that legacy, start investing in local clubs at grassroots levels so we can get juniors involved, and new juniors that may not have the pedigree like the Kelly brothers or like the Waters family, so that we can keep producing generation after generation of champions like those I have just spoken about.

The grand prix matters – everyone in this place knows that. As the member for Nepean said earlier, we are not opposing this bill. We are concerned about the length of time, but we are not opposing it. The event and motorsport, like I have said, are worth protecting and promoting, but this bill is overreach. It locks out locals – again, those grassroots community members, the sports clubs, the rowing clubs, the runners and the walkers – and it has happened without evidence, without consultation and without accountability. So those of us on this side will always support the grand prix. I personally will always support motorsport, because, like I said earlier, I am a motorsport enthusiast. I do not really mind what discipline it is, but I do much prefer the big, chunky ones – the V8s and motorcycles. Like I have said, I can tell you that from Larry Perkins's six Bathurst triumphs to Josh Waters's four – (*Time expired*)

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:59): It is a great pleasure to rise and speak on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025 and of course great to follow the member – lots of passion for motorsport and lots of passion for her local community and passion for the Australian Grand Prix. These seem to be some key themes moving through this place today when debating this very important bill, a bill which talks to the strength of Melbourne as not just Australia's sporting capital but indeed the sporting capital of the world, and that is something that we are all very proud of here in Melbourne. We are absolutely the place to be – I have seen that on a numberplate before. There are a whole range of other things that make Melbourne what it is, but certainly our events calendar is indeed one of them. And of course it is always a great pleasure to first thank and acknowledge some of the people who have worked incredibly hard – all the people in the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC), all the staff at the minister's office and all the people who do the hard work at the department level.

I know that Minister Dimopoulos as well, who is a little bit under the weather this week – yes, I know you are not supposed to mention their name; he is a great guy, though – will be watching every single minute of this, and he will be shaking his head.

Vicki Ward: He will be if you're on your feet. How could he not?

Jackson TAYLOR: Yes, 100 per cent. I tell you what, Minister, he will be shaking his head at this horrible, lacklustre contribution I am making and will continue to make. I just want to do him proud.

Jade Benham interjected.

Jackson TAYLOR: I do not yield. He will be disappointed. I can only try my best and live up to the fine work by the member for Mildura in her previous contribution. But I give a big thankyou to everyone involved and a big thankyou to everyone who makes the grand prix the great success it is. No doubt I will continue to spend many more minutes talking about the great race that it is.

It was great to hear the member for Pascoe Vale before talking about his passion for the race, his involvement in motorsport more broadly and of course talking a bit about some of the detail of the impact that it has on Melbourne's and Victoria's economy, because it has a significant impact. It was great to hear the member for Pascoe Vale reflect on that, and I am looking forward to hearing the member for Albert Park make a fantastic contribution on this bill as well. I know the member for Albert Park is a fantastic representative of her local community and has made a number of representations when it comes to this bill on behalf of her community.

I was talking to the member for Bundoora before as well, and he told me this was the second race that stops a nation. I thought, how true – it absolutely is. It has come a very, very long way. I remember going to the grand prix in the days of Mark Webber. I was a huge F1 fan, less so these days with this job.

John Mullahy interjected.

Jackson TAYLOR: I do like PIASTRI, member for Glen Waverley. He is very unassuming – very chill. He is very good on the Instagram reels.

John Mullahy: I spoke to his dad last weekend.

Jackson TAYLOR: Did you really? Very good. Hansard is going to be like 'Didn't hear any of that,' but they are going to try their best. It will just say 'asterisk inaudible asterisk'. Fantastic. I like this guy – very good. No, Oscar PIASTRI – great guy. He has one of the closest leads at the half-time break of the year. I was flipping through Instagram on F1, looking at all the half-time leads over the past few years, and I tell you what, between PIASTRI and Norris it is going to be absolutely phenomenal in the McLarens. It is great to see McLaren back up and about, because McLaren have been nowhere to be found for many, many years. It is great to see an Australian in a winning car for once; it seems like Oscar PIASTRI has finally got a car that does not come second, like Webber unfortunately did back in the day with Sebastian Vettel. I still remember 'multi 21' – multi 21 broke my heart. I was watching that race. Seb Vettel won the world championship that year, and I think Webber came second or third. It was his best finish for the year, but this would have made a huge difference in this race. Red Bull Racing team said, 'Multi 21, Seb,' which was code for 'Don't take over the lead. This is your teammate. Let him get the victory. This is the agreed strategy at this point.' But Sebastian Vettel ended up breaking the hearts of millions of Australians at that race. I cannot quite remember which one it was; it was not the Australian Grand Prix. There might possibly have been respectful protests if it had occurred in Australia.

My love for the grand prix has gone many, many years back, and it is great to see many Australians pick up a love for the sport as well. There are so many people that I did not even think of that would be fans of F1 who have watched the *Drive to Survive* Netflix series.

A member interjected.

Jackson TAYLOR: A fantastic show – seven seasons in. I tell you what, there are so many people who now are F1 fanatics. They are turning up to coffee catch-ups with me wearing McLaren paraphernalia or Ferrari paraphernalia. It is absolutely wild; it is next level. But it is fantastic to see. It is such an exciting sport, and it is also a sport that has come a long way in terms of safety. Of course there is never any chance you want to take, and it is really great to see that the sport itself puts the safety of its drivers and all the people who work in pit lane and everybody in the sport first and foremost. It is great to see that safety has taken many leaps forward, certainly since the 1970s and 80s, and certainly in the time that I have been watching, especially with the halos, which have been a significant development in terms of safety – particularly for drivers in collisions, which we certainly see less than we used to. We see them, and we are always in shock and awe and we are always hoping that they are okay. I am really glad to see that safety has certainly come a long way and been developed to look after drivers.

Of course we know that, as I said before, Melbourne is certainly the sporting capital not just of Australia but of the world. We have every single event. We have got the Melbourne Cricket Club – we have got the G. I love Melburnians, and I love Australians. The Melbourne Cricket Ground was too long, then we called it the MCG, and then we decided, ‘No, that’s too long. We’re just going to call it the G.’ Soon we are just going to call it the ‘Guh’ at some point – terrible joke, terrible joke, terrible joke. But it is one of the world’s finest stadiums. People from all over the world come here and marvel at it, and they are in awe. The member for Malvern has just walked in, grin on his face. He is in awe as well. Member for Malvern, are you are a fan of the G?

Michael O’Brien: The what?

Jackson TAYLOR: The G, the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the MCG. Have you been to an Ashes test at the G?

Michael O’Brien: I have been to many Ashes tests at the MCG.

Jackson TAYLOR: Fantastic. I tell you what, the Ashes – fantastic. We can look forward to some fantastic – are the Ashes back this year at the G?

Michael O’Brien: This year.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Juliana Addison): Through the Chair.

Jackson TAYLOR: Through the Chair – thank you very much, Acting Speaker. How dare I. Yes, fantastic. I am looking forward to the cricket this year. It is going to be an absolute banger.

Michael O’Brien interjected.

Jackson TAYLOR: Yes, Scotty Boland. He is going to lift. He is up and about. And I tell you what, it is not just the G. Obviously we have got AFL and we have got the NRL. I am less of a fan of the NRL; I do not quite understand it. It does not matter how many games I watch, I will never understand the rules. I am trying, and I am going to keep trying, I promise. We have got the tennis, the Australian Open – absolutely fantastic. How good is the Australian Open? Next level. It is great to see so many people up and about at Melbourne Park, coming down, enjoying the sport, enjoying the tennis, enjoying all that Melbourne has to offer.

What else have we got? We have got the spring carnival, which is fantastic. As the member for Bundoora was saying, the grand prix is the second race that stops the nation; of course the first race that stops the nation is the Melbourne Cup. Fantastic – the first Tuesday of November. It is the only time of the year I will put a little bet on. I have done well in previous years – last year not so well. But I am happy to say goodbye to \$20 for the once-a-year occasion, as a lot of Victorians do.

Locally as well we know that we have lots of great events right across this state, as many members I am sure will pick up here today on this piece of legislation. We even had the Wiggles in Knox, and I think that is a pretty major event. The Wiggles were at Knox, at Caribbean Gardens. Everyone has been to Caribbean Gardens, no? Caribbean Gardens is fantastic. I am sure nobody ever bought a pirated DVD from the Caribbean Gardens; nobody ever did that. If you should not steal a car, then you should not steal a DVD. We are going back, and I used to love those ads in the movies. But it is very true. That is why we are all on streaming services now, because it is accessible, it is easy, it is nice, it is chill and we can all do it within reason. Caribbean Gardens – we had the Wiggles, and that was fantastic, and now with a two-year-old it is all ‘Hot potato this, hot potato that’.

This bill is to amend the Australian Grands Prix Act 1994 to extend the maximum duration – you see how I did that, member for Glen Waverley and member for Mulgrave? – that the race period can be declared for, facilitate public access to parts of Albert Park during the race period, update the definition of ‘grand prix insignia’ and provide for acting appointments to the AGPC board – this is serious stuff, everyone, so please listen up. It provides increased payments to the committee of management of Albert Park –

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Jackson TAYLOR: Thank you, member for Frankston. *Hansard* definitely picked that one up, much to my dismay. And it enables the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to host non-motorsport events approved by the minister. It is a fantastic bill, and I am proud to be a Melburnian, proud to be Victorian. Get around the Australian Grand Prix, get around Oscar Piastri. Come on, McLaren. Go well.

Rachel WESTAWAY (Pahran) (11:09): My goodness, what a wideranging debate this has been. Let me bring it back to the grand prix – I am sorry, everyone. I rise today to speak on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025, a piece of legislation that, whilst ostensibly supporting Victorian motorsports, raises significant concerns about community consultation, proportionate regulation and the balance between commercial interests and community access to our precious public parklands. As the member for Pahrnan, the grand prix butts up adjacent to my electorate, so it affects the people along Queens Road and those that live on St Kilda Road that utilise the Albert Park Lake precinct and the grand prix track on a regular basis, so it is something that I am really passionate to be speaking about today. We are not opposing this, but we believe that there should be better community consultation in regard to this, and this is where the government has fallen down. My constituents have not been informed and have not had the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the extension of the time in which the grand prix is set up and activities would take place.

Let me begin by acknowledging the reality for the people of Pahrnan. As I said before, we live next to Albert Park. For one week each year our neighbourhood transforms into a global motorsport venue. Do not get me wrong, I love motorsports. I love the grand prix. I have been to the Monaco Grand Prix. I have been very fortunate to attend that. I have gone to the grand prix in Victoria many times. I love the grand prix. I love fast cars – not chap laps down Chapel Street, but I love fast cars and sports cars. The streets fill with visitors, the noise level soars and the access to our local park becomes restricted. This is the reality that we have learned to live with, and many of my constituents have made their peace with hosting this event. Some volunteer, others open their homes to visitors with Airbnb and many have simply adapted their routines around race week. But there is a difference between accepting a week-long disruption and being asked to accept three weeks of park closure with minimal consultation and, to be frank, questionable justification.

This brings me to what can only be described as a failure in democratic process. Just weeks ago Port Phillip deputy mayor Bryan Mears stood on a milk crate in Albert Park and told 100 concerned residents that he was very disappointed not to have received prior notice regarding the proposed 21-day closure of the Albert Park Reserve. If a deputy mayor – an elected representative whose ward includes this very park – was caught off guard, what does that say about consultation with ordinary residents? The thousands of residents in my electorate of Pahrnan who live on Queens Road and St Kilda Road were kept completely in the dark. These are people who use Albert Park daily. They walk their dogs around the lake at dawn. They jog the circuit paths after work. They take their children to play and to sporting activities on weekends. My own children have done sailing lessons around Albert Park Lake with their local primary school. Yet they discovered this proposal not through genuine community consultation but through media reports and hastily organised community rallies. This is not consultation, this is a notification after the fact. The brief feedback period that followed was little more than a token gesture to tick the democratic box at F1 lightning speed.

The proposed extension of the race period from seven to up to 21 days presents considerable challenges for local sports clubs, particularly rowing and sailing clubs, which depend on uninterrupted access to the lake and do not have the capacity to rehome to a nearby location. Let me paint a picture of what this actually means. Albert Park hosts a diverse range of sporting activities that serve our community year round. The rowing and sailing clubs provide water sports opportunities, but they are just part of the broader sporting ecosystem. The Albert Park Golf Course, a public facility that provides affordable golf to thousands of Melburnians – my son Fletch, who is just 17 years old, goes to the driving range and absolutely loves it – faces significant disruption. Cricket and soccer clubs that use

the park's ovals will further be displaced. Basketball courts that serve local schools and community groups will be inaccessible. Tennis facilities that host junior development programs will also be locked away. Rowing and sailing clubs will be off water for three weeks at the height of their season. The Albert Park College rowing program looks unlikely to be able to compete in the schools Head of the River. Schools using pavilions as classrooms will have three weeks mid-term disruption. We are talking about denying access to diverse sporting facilities during peak seasons – and that is March, when the weather is perfect, when school programs are in full swing and when community participation across all sports is at its highest.

Albert Park is a vital route for many riders travelling from beachside suburbs to the inner city and comprises as well part of the route for many recreational rides. For three weeks thousands of cyclists will be forced onto busy streets, creating safety risks and disrupting established transport patterns that they may rely on for their daily commutes.

The government argues this extension is necessary for safety reasons, but where is the evidence? Despite multiple briefings and requests for information, the government has failed to provide documentation of any reported accidents involving the public that would justify this dramatic extension. The risk appears speculative and disproportionate. We are being asked to accept a tripling of disruption based on a theoretical concern rather than a demonstrated need. If safety is genuinely the concern, there are targeted measures that could address specific risks without imposing a blanket 21-day closure. Enhanced fencing, improved signage and additional security during the set-up and breakdown periods – these are proportionate responses to safety concerns in my view.

This bill also permits the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to host non-motorsport events with ministerial approval. Now that we have advocated for the corporation to increase profitability and reduce government contribution, that makes fiscal sense, but there must be some oversight over these events to ensure that they do not add to the government deficits. What exactly are these events going to be? Are we talking about rock concerts? Are we talking about another Big Day Out over Albert Park Lake? What about music festivals that bring thousands more visitors to the area? And what about the rights of residential neighbours? The bill provides no detail, no parameters and has had no community input in terms of requirements. These are some of my concerns. My constituents have learned to live and manage with one major disruption per year. Now they are being asked to potentially accept multiple large-scale events with no consultation and no detail about their nature, scale or impact. This is a blank cheque for disruption dressed up as revenue diversification. If the Australian Grand Prix Corporation wants to run concerts, festivals or other major events in our neighbourhood park, the community deserves to know what we are up for. Will these be 50,000-person music events, corporate events, international conferences? The bill's silence on this matter is deeply concerning.

Let me be clear about my position: we understand the grand prix brings economic activity to Melbourne; however, this should not come at the cost of reasonable community access to public parkland or proper democratic consultation. We also recognise the Australian Grand Prix Corporation's effort to diversify its revenue streams. Reducing government dependence may have merit, but this too requires proper oversight, community consideration and transparency about what we are actually agreeing to host in our neighbourhoods. The fundamental issue is that Albert Park is not just an event venue, it is a community asset that serves residents 365 days a year – minus one week at present but proposed to be three weeks. The people of Prahran live with the impacts of major events and they deserve genuine consideration and consultation and not just gestures. Whilst we will not oppose this bill outright, we cannot ignore the legitimate concerns raised by the community. The legislation lacks proportionality and fails to deliver adequate justification for such a dramatic expansion of exclusion periods.

In the Legislative Council we will reserve our position; without clear evidence of safety incidents that justify this extension and without proper parameters around these mysterious non-motorsport events, we may seek amendments to remove or modify the race period extension and add proper oversight mechanisms for additional events. But if we are to ask the community to accept extended disruptions

and potentially multiple major events per year, we must also deliver meaningful improvements to my constituents. The sorts of meaningful improvements that I am talking about – how about footbridges over Queens Road? We have them there during the time of the grand prix, and then they are dismantled. But wouldn't it be great if people that live on Queens Road could actually cross over the footbridge and have it stay there all the time, or better still, go underground for access. But at this point in time, this infrastructure simply has not been discussed.

The other thing that I would like to raise – and it is just an idea – is that for the for the grand final we have the fantastic grand final parade around Bourke Street Mall. We celebrate these fabulous tourism events. I argue against chap laps, and I have brought it up in the media several times, the danger of them, but for sporting enthusiasts, how about having vintage grand prix cars actually going down Toorak Road and Chapel Street? These are some of the innovative things that we could actually see as investments and something that promotes the grand prix but gives back to the community as a fun activity that is free and that local families could actually afford to attend. Because we have heard about the ticket pricing, we have heard about the lack of access for everyday Australians, who cannot afford to go to the grand prix, so I would like to see better investment.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (11:19): It is a pleasure to rise this morning and speak on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. Following on from the member for Prahran, I think there are some good ideas there. We see, outside Cranbourne every year, a huge gathering of people going down to the Phillip Island grand prix for MotoGP, and certainly people's interest would be spiked I think if we had vintage or other cars as a family event in streets as well. I think that level of thinking, that innovation, is something that we definitely need to encourage.

Speaking from an economic point of view, the grand prix provides a significant contribution to the Victorian visitor economy, and that is the spend on the actual grand prix itself. It contributes to the vibrancy and the livability of Victoria – hotels, pubs, restaurants. It is worth about \$323.9 million to our gross state product, and that cannot be underestimated. What we are seeing today is a balancing act where this bill seeks to modernise a system that was put in place many, many years ago – I believe probably about 30 years ago – to ensure that we can keep a super-famous race going. In fact I think it is second only to Silverstone in participation.

This bill actually covers one of my favourite races, which is not the grand prix but MotoGP at the island. I am a big fan of MotoGP and love seeing the engineering and mechanics of those bikes just pushed absolutely to the limit and seeing those riders too. Unlike with cars, every movement of their body causes some kind of effect, whether it is gyroscopic or a physical effect on the track. It is amazing to see in real life, so I am a huge fan and a huge fan of car racing as well. That is why I support this bill.

I think this bill from an economic perspective stacks up. Although there have been, I admit, some issues that have been brought up by the opposition, that does not mean that there has not been consultation, and it does not mean that maybe people just agreed with the outcomes of that consultation. There will always be people who argue for and against things, and I think it is our responsibility to hear from both of those groups, but it does not mean that at the end of the day you do not have to decide on one way or another.

Just going through the economics of this event, as I said, it is worth about \$323 million to our gross state product. In 2025 it generated 1631 full-time equivalent jobs. It generated an estimated \$3 in direct economic impact to Victoria for every dollar invested by the Victorian government – that is a very good return – and it attracted an Albert Park record attendance of 465,498 people in 2025. Hotel occupancy in Melbourne for the Friday was 93 per cent, for the Saturday it was 94 per cent and for the Sunday 90 per cent. For the first time we had the F1 Melbourne Fan Festival, a new free family-friendly event at Melbourne Park, and we ensured that more people could be part of the excitement this year.

Additionally, the event is only broadcast live to some of the state's key trading partners and tourism partners, such as China, India and Japan, and that broadcast viewership is approximately 78 million. That is 78 million people that see Melbourne on the big stage, on their TV screens in Japan, in China. These are people that will come and visit Melbourne as an international and internationally acclaimed city. That is 78 million people possibly planning their next holiday to Melbourne, so those economic benefits just go on and on. We have seen that through other events here in Melbourne, being the events capital, which I will go into in a second.

So why would we have people pontificating today, telling us they are supporting the bill but they might put some amendments up in the upper house, yet they are in some ways, from what I have heard, opposing factors that are not actually in the parameters of the bill as well? What I got from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's contribution today was that he wants the F1 to be smaller, and it cannot continue to run at its size. Again, go back to the economics of this – \$323.9 million, plus all those force multipliers as far as tourism and whatnot. I think it speaks for itself. I think people that know this race know that it is important that we keep it in Melbourne, and to do that we actually have to match some of the international expectations as well.

So this legislation today – as I said, the act has been in force for over 30 years, and it covers the grand prix and the MotoGP. These events grow, they change and they evolve, and there is a good reason for that. As with all legislation, the act needs to fit the contemporary needs of the grand prix. With its growth in popularity comes a complexity that we have heard members speak about today, and there is a balance that needs to be struck there to maintain that safe operation and to keep the event in line with the needs of the community as well.

The act currently allows for seven days for that race period, and while that might have been adequate 30 years ago, it is certainly not adequate now.

Seeing what goes into making that race what it is, it is quite amazing to fit that into that period. Even seeing what goes on down at Phillip Island for that community to prepare for that race – let alone the racetrack and all the infrastructure that goes into it – is amazing.

Bigger attendances obviously mean larger footprints and larger safety mitigation strategies, so the extended or the maximum extended time for the race period, I think, is critical to keep this race going. Pedestrians and cyclists are certainly concerned. It is something – and I think others have spoken about it – that is certainly mitigated in this bill, the safety factors and the exposure to workers with growing infrastructure builds and also dismantling that infrastructure as well. The bill also establishes a mechanism to enable the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to allow access to Albert Park during the race period, and that ensures that the public continues to have as much access to the park as possible for as long as it is safe to do so, and it is intended that the amendments will be made to the act to facilitate operation of public access areas as well.

The bill also reduces the time for which a designated access period can be declared under the act to compensate for a potentially increased race period, and that designated access period allows the AGPC to control small parcels of land for storage and other matters as appropriate. I think the reduction will avoid inconsistencies between the race period and the designated access period. Certainly, I think we have heard some fans of the race today, but this is part of a suite where Melbourne and Victoria is the major events capital of the nation. A recent independent study commissioned by Visit Victoria found the major events calendar contributed \$3.3 billion in value to our economy, up from \$2.5 billion the year before, and it generated more than 15,500 jobs every year. Under our government, the Allan Labor government, that pipeline just keeps getting bigger and better and includes recent announcements that we have heard from the sports minister of a multiyear deal for Melbourne to host NFL regular season games from 2026; a two-year deal to host the Australian Open golf; the NBA x NBL series, which is the first time an NBA team, and that is the New Orleans Pelicans, will play on Australian soil; the Rugby World Cup in 2027; *A Beautiful Noise*, the Neil Diamond musical's Australian premiere; and also *Westwood* at the National Gallery of Victoria. So that is that is around

\$40 billion of investment in major events in Victoria's economy, and it eclipses the 2024 tourism target more than a year ahead of schedule. That is something I think we should be celebrating.

Of course, as other people in this chamber have said today, there is a balance to be struck as far as the community concerns. There is, and I cannot talk to them today. I have not spoken to many people in that community, but certainly I know the local member has been listening. I know the government has been listening. But as for the economic advantage that this gives Victoria, it cannot be overstated. When people go to talk events down and talk Victoria down, it does have an effect on our economy. It is one that we cannot measure, but we know it occurs. It is hard to measure that, but we know that it does occur. People flock to these events, and we should be taking advantage of that as a Victorian government and supporting that on the international stage as we do, and I definitely commend this bill to the house.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (11:29): I rise for the Greens to oppose the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. At its core, this bill takes more of Albert Park from the public for longer, concentrates more decision-making power in the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and asks the community to simply trust that access will somehow be protected while the park is fenced off for three times longer than it currently is. The government calls this a safety fix and a tidy-up; I call it a land and access grab on precious public land. What does this bill do? First of all, it extends the race period – that is the time that Albert Park can be declared off limits – from seven days to up to 21 days. It also lets the corporation carve out public access areas during that period at its discretion and tightens control over the site, and it expands the corporation's remit so that it can run non-motorsport events not just at Albert Park but anywhere in Victoria under ministerial approval. These are not my words; they are the government's own second-reading and introduction explanations.

Finally, it does double the annual payment to Parks Victoria, but even so, that new amount falls far short of what is actually needed by Parks Victoria. Let us be clear about the real-world effect here. A three-week lockdown is triple the current maximum exclusion period. The government says access can be protected via designated public access zones, but all of that is controlled by the corporation and the minister. There is no guaranteed right of access to the lake or the perimeter path in that period, and the bill explicitly contemplates longer, broader restrictions. The statement of compatibility openly acknowledges that public access will be further limited for the sake of the event.

The community knows what that means. The City of Port Phillip, speaking for thousands of locals who walk, run, ride and walk their dogs around the lake, warn that the extended closure would significantly restrict recreation and sports and that the non-motorsport provision is poorly defined. They have asked the government to slow down and spell out what this actually means for the residents and the clubs. Sporting clubs are already at the end of their tether. The Albert Park community sports association has said very plainly:

[QUOTES AWAITING VERIFICATION]

Albert Park is first and foremost a community sports precinct, and each expansion of the event footprint displaces volunteers and players who keep local sport alive.

As their president put it when these plans first surfaced:

This is primarily a park, not a corporate paddock for sale.

Sailing and rowing clubs, school programs and weekend competitions will lose precious time at the height of their seasons. Schools using pavilions as classrooms face multiweek disruptions. Even in an ordinary year access is constricted for weeks before and after the race by road closures and construction traffic. This bill entrenches and extends that disruption. This is not a balance; it is shifting the entire risk and inconvenience to the public so that the build can run in a sealed construction zone of the corporation's choosing. Let us be clear: the current bill increases that hard lockdown from seven to 21 days. But there is already a soft lockdown. Community and sporting clubs are already restricted to areas of the park for a longer four-month period every single year, so I listened with great interest to

the contribution from the member for Nepean, who also talked about the adverse impacts the extended time periods will have on the community. The Greens of course are always happy to talk to any member in this place about better outcomes for the community.

Those impacts on the community spread to impacts on education as well. The South Melbourne Park Primary School community is appalled that while a third of a billion dollars was gifted earlier this year to the grand prix – an overseas private corporation – the primary school that shares Albert Park is left in the slow lane begging for essential funds. One of those upgrades is a simple pedestrian crossing that would let their children safely cross the road to school. The school council president Katrina Walker has outlined how seven years of campaigning for modest funding has yielded nothing. She said:

The recent announcement of \$350 million to be spent on redeveloping the Albert Park Pit Lane complex is galling and worse is the fact that the state government secretly ripped \$2.4 billion from state schools.

My colleague in the other place asked the Minister for Education in May when essential funding for upgrades at the South Melbourne Park Primary School would be provided. Three months later, and now 2½ months overdue, that question still remains unanswered.

The government's rationale for this bill is safety. We all agree that safety matters, and if safety during bump in and bump out is a problem, then the government should set strict caps on construction vehicle movements, limit the event footprint, reduce the number of temporary structures and stop the relentless festivalisation of this race.

Do not punish the community because these events keep consuming more and more of the park. Even the consultation materials admit the change is being sought because works already happen well outside the existing seven-day period. That is an event management issue, not a licence to close the park. There is more scope creep baked into this bill. It lets the corporation host non-motorsport events anywhere in Victoria and potentially in the park with ministerial approval. The minister's own speech says it is to reduce reliance on government funding. That is a policy choice to turn a park racing authority into a general events promoter with all the incentives to monetise public land. The City of Port Phillip has already raised concerns about the lack of detail here. The government's implicit call – 'Trust us, we'll protect the access' – is just not good enough. Put hard, enforceable limits in the act, not promises in a media release.

On money, the bill doubles the legislated payment from the corporation to Parks Victoria from a measly \$100,000 to another measly \$200,000. I am glad the government finally admits that the current figure is hopelessly out of date and insufficient. Section 41 of the 1994 act literally capped it at \$100,000. But in context \$200,000 is merely a rounding error. The corporation's own annual reports show Victorian taxpayer contributions topping \$100.6 million in 2023 alone, and the government announced this year \$350 million, more than a third of \$1 billion, for pit building and precinct updates. \$200,000 a year is not cost recovery. It is a token fee while the Victorian public carries the burden. We should be replacing this token annual payment with a transparent formula that is tied to the real costs borne by Parks Victoria, tenants and Victorian taxpayers and establish a dedicated community fund for grassroots sport, biodiversity and pathway upgrades administered jointly with the council and the park users.

Meanwhile, clubs and residents point out that basic park improvements lag. The government's media talking points boast that in 2025 the race drew more than 465,000 people and that it is locked in until 2037. If that is true, then an honest resettlement with the community is overdue: genuine shared governance, guaranteed access windows and a dedicated fund that actually offsets the disruption to grassroots sport and the park ecology, not a symbolic cheque to the landlord. There are environmental costs as well. Save Albert Park has documented the long-term impacts of tearing up the park to accommodate a racetrack, from tree loss to treeless safety runoffs to chronic constraints on landscaping. Recent reports around the new pit building point to further tree removals. Parks are our urban lungs. They are not empty staging areas waiting to be hired out.

Let us talk about governance and power. This bill lets the minister appoint acting corporation board members and the chair. It grows the corporation's scope and locks in longer closures. But where is the matching increase in community oversight? Where is the requirement to publish a community access plan that is binding, measurable and enforceable? Where is the independent monitoring of noise, traffic and ecology during the race period? Where are the compensation triggers for displaced tenants beyond those who were there in 1994? Even the government's own statement of compatibility notes that small businesses and clubs can be forced to scale back or shut up for 21 days. If you are going to expand the corporation's powers, expand the community's too. Publish a credible, peer-reviewed cost-benefit analysis that includes the public subsidy, environmental externalities and the opportunity cost of locking up a flagship urban park. The government says the event contributes to hundreds of millions in gross state product, and that has been contested for decades. Put the full ledger on the table for the public to see – full transparency and accountability.

We all know that Melbourne can host big events without treating public parks as blank canvases for private fences extracting private profit from the public purse. The Greens want a vibrant major events calendar and thriving community sport.

We also want honesty about who pays and who is displaced. Right now this bill asks the public to swallow a longer lockout, give a foreign-owned corporation more power over a key public asset, accept a token payment and applaud the promise that access will be protected. The people of Albert Park, Middle Park, Port Melbourne and South Melbourne and the clubs and schools that use this precinct all year deserve better than 'Trust us'. They deserve binding safeguards, real compensation and a government that puts the community first. On that test this bill fails. We will oppose it, and we urge the government to withdraw and return with a community-led plan that fits the park, not just the race.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (11:41): I would like to start my contribution by addressing some of the comments that were just made by the member opposite me. Firstly, there may be some doom and gloom on that side about the grand prix and how bad it may be for Victoria, but the reality is it increases tourism every single year. It sees people flock from all over the world to our great state to enjoy not only the grand prix but a whole festival of events, one that I believe – and I know the minister does as well – can be expanded. That is exactly what goes to the heart of this bill and to the changes that we are trying to make. On that note I want to thank Minister Dimopoulos and of course the Allan Labor government for everything that we have done not only for the Australian Grand Prix but for all of the events in Melbourne.

As we know, Melbourne is the events capital. We have got festivals, we have got the Australian Open, we have got the Spring Racing Carnival and we are the home of the AFL and the NBL. We have got the food and wine festival, the international comedy festival, of course the Melbourne Fashion Festival, which many around this chamber like to go to, and then the grand prix, which we are talking about today. I think it is probably well known that the Formula One Australian Grand Prix provides a significant contribution to the Victorian visitor economy, driving visitation and spending, contributing to the vibrancy and livability of Victoria and promoting Melbourne and Victoria to a global audience. It is truly one of the biggest jewels in Victoria's major events crown, and because of the Allan Labor government the grand prix will remain here until at least 2037 – something that should absolutely be celebrated.

Fans flock to Melbourne from around the world for our grand prix, filling local hotels, restaurants, pubs and businesses, and we intend to keep it that way because that is a good thing for Victoria and for our economy. The F1 Australian Grand Prix helps brand Melbourne and Victoria not only as a sporting and major events capital but as a city that is leading the world – and it is. That is something that I and our government are very proud of.

I need to give a shout-out not only to our wonderful minister in this space, Minister Dimopoulos, and his team, but also to the Premier for the work that she has done. I should also thank Hollywood, and I

do so because I have got some friends from San Francisco, Luke and Jodie. Their daughter, who is at university, came to them earlier this year and said, ‘Dad, I’ve been watching *Drive to Survive*, and I want to go to Australia. We have always wanted to do it. I want to go to Australia and be part of the grand prix this year in March.’ They ended up not only coming to Melbourne, Victoria. They booked a three-week holiday. They spent two weeks here in Melbourne, went around our region, spent plenty of money, booked into plenty of hotels, went to the grand prix and then also visited Queensland on their way back. Again, this is identifying the fact that because of the grand prix we have higher visitation numbers and more people who not only enjoy the grand prix but are also able to come along and enjoy the best that Australia and of course our wonderful city have to offer.

The grand prix has changed a lot since the first race back in 1996, and attendance continues to grow – from 314,900 in 2014 to over 465,000 in 2025. The event now has the second-highest attendance on the F1 calendar after Silverstone, and the Australian Grand Prix Corporation constructs the equivalent of more than half an MCG’s worth of temporary seating. We are the best city in the world, and we are the best at hosting events. I know that we can become number one in this space as well. The 2025 grand prix event increased Victoria’s gross state product by \$323.9 million.

It generated 1631 full-time equivalent jobs, it generated an estimated \$3.08 in direct economic impact to Victoria for every dollar that was invested by the Victorian government, and it attracted an Albert Park record attendance of 465,498 people. Of the four Australian drivers who are currently competing across the four global formula categories, all four of them are from Melbourne – again, something to be celebrated.

2025 was the first time that we had the F1 Melbourne Fan Festival, which was a new free family-friendly event at Melbourne Park ensuring that more people could be part of the fun, the activity and the enjoyment of it all. Additionally, the event is broadcast live to some of Victoria’s key trading partners and tourism markets such as China, India and Japan. Broadcast viewership was approximately 78.5 million people around the globe. That is an additional 78.5 million people looking at Melbourne, looking at Victoria, seeing what we have to offer and considering it for a potential holiday.

The Australian Grands Prix Act 1994 has been in force for over 30 years. It empowers the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to hold the F1 grand prix at Albert Park and the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix at Phillip Island. These events have been annual features of the Victorian major events calendar since 1996 and 1997 respectively, but as we know, things do change over time. It is called evolution. As with all legislation, it is important to ensure that the Australian Grands Prix Act remains fit for purpose and reflects contemporary needs.

With the grand prix continuing to grow in popularity and complexity, this bill makes a number of amendments to the act to ensure that arrangements continue to support the grand prix and the community. The act currently allows for the declaration of a race period not exceeding seven days. While this may have been adequate 30 years ago, the grand prix has grown significantly. Therefore the infrastructure required has also grown with it, and the time needed to build and dismantle race infrastructure has naturally increased. Bigger attendance at the grand prix naturally requires a bigger event footprint and more infrastructure. Consequently, the bill proposes to increase exclusive access to Albert Park to up to 21 days. This is simply evolution and makes sense. The extension to maximise the duration of the race period is critical as pedestrians and cyclists would otherwise be subjected to increasing safety risks through exposure to workers and vehicles undertaking the growing infrastructure build and dismantle. This is something that needs to occur if we want to remain the best in the world.

Talking about the best in the world, I was very fortunate to attend the Singapore Grand Prix, and I can say that they know how to attract people. They have a number of non-motorsport events around the week of the Singapore Grand Prix, which naturally increases both tourism and economic spend into Singapore. They have moved with the times, and they host events such as the Milken Institute conference and the Temasek annual meeting the week prior, along with a number of other events.

These conferences and events, combined with the Singapore Grand Prix, attract huge crowds and a huge following who not only come for the race but come there for work. It is good for the entire region, it is good for tourism, it is good for their economy. I raise this because the amendments in this bill allow us to do, if we as a state want to, something similar, which one would assume would have a direct economic benefit for Victoria and for our great state. We have already got an absolutely incredible event, but what is the harm in making it even better?

Everybody in this place would absolutely agree with the fact that we know that we have got the world's best city. We have incredible events here in Melbourne, and we can make this Australian Grand Prix even better. It is something that on this side of the chamber we are very proud of and very much want to see grow and continue. These amendments to the bill are necessary, and I hope that we get the full support of everyone across the chamber.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (11:49): I rise to talk on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025 legislation report. I am happy to let the member for Kororoit know that we are not opposing this bill. Like most members in the chamber – I am not sure about the ones that normally sit behind me – we are incredibly proud of the Australian Grand Prix, and this year it will be highlighted when the Oscar show hits town. Currently we have a Melburnian that is leading the F1 championship table, and I think when he comes back to his home town most Victorians and Australians will be behind him hoping that he can seal the deal and we get a win. We hope that he is a world champion in the very, very near future.

The purpose of the bill today is to amend the Australian Grands Prix Act 1994 to extend the maximum race period from seven to 21 days; allow the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) to host minister-approved, non-motorsport events; broaden powers regarding public access areas, including closures for safety and emergency reasons; increase the Australian Grand Prix Corporation's financial contribution to Parks Victoria from \$100,000 to \$200,000; provide for acting appointments and expanded control; and make other consequential amendments. What we do know is when you have world-class facilities and you are putting on a world-class show, as the F1 is when it comes to town, you do need to make sure that it does run smoothly.

In saying that, we do also need to pick up the local people that are going to be impacted in and around the area. We are on the outside sort of looking in a bit, and I think it looks like the member for Albert Park will be on her feet next. I am sure that she will be able to explain exactly how the locals are feeling about it. I think because it has been here for so long, most would understand the necessity of sometimes making some alterations and amendments to a bill to make sure that we do have this world-class operation that comes to town and this world-class Formula One race that everyone can enjoy, not only here in Victoria but right around the world – because if you watch it on television, the actual overhead shots of Albert Park, I do not think anyone can claim that they do not highlight how wonderful Victoria is and how wonderful Victoria looks when the cars are going around. I am sure the member for Albert Park will be able to explain it much better than I and probably most members standing up in the chamber can, because she has her feet and her ears on the ground, knowing what is going on.

As I said, there will be merchandise galore with Oscar – it is going to be a circus when it comes to town. You can just see it. It is going to be fantastic that we have got a Melburnian standing up, punching above his weight on a world stage. It will be fantastic.

The Australian Grand Prix at Albert Park is among Victoria's largest annual sporting events, with significant tourism and economic benefits. My colleague the member for Mildura loves her motorsport. It does not matter what type of motorsport it is, she is right across it. If you heard her contribution on how passionate she is about the industry, that does extrapolate out to most people in regional Victoria. I think you have only got to go into your local areas and see your car clubs, whether they are vintage car clubs or hot rod clubs or whatever, to see the passion. You can talk to people and

know who they are, but the underlying tone of people that are passionate about motorsport I think is going to come to the fore.

Current laws at the moment limit the declared area – the track and associated facilities – to a seven-day race period. The bill triples this to 21. Of course when you are doing something like this you are going to get certain people in the area and certain groups that will push back. It does not matter what you are doing, but for us to be on the world's stage, we need to make sure that we do listen to those people that have concerns and that we take their concerns on board, because there can be unintended consequences. Just thinking here on my feet – when the timber industry shut down in Gippsland the unintended consequence of it flowing onto white paper manufacturing was something that was not thought of.

So we need to do our due diligence in here to make sure that extending it from seven to 21 days does not have impacts on the people that live and breathe in Albert Park on a daily basis.

The bill empowers the AGPC to declare public access areas by gazette, but closures of these areas can be done by website notice only, with failure to publish not invalidating a declaration. The bill permits running non-motorsport events with ministerial approval, which is aimed at reducing the overall government contribution to the corporation.

As I said, in bringing these amendments, most people outside the area of Albert Park, the people that live there, would have limited concerns with this going through, hence we are not opposing it. But we do need to make sure that we have those checks and balances to make sure that we are getting it right and getting it right the first time that we are doing this.

Also, being from regional Victoria, we had a major world-class event which was obviously – and I like the smirk on your face, Acting Speaker Addison – due to take place, the Commonwealth Games, with infrastructure and builds that were going to be upgrades to our sporting facilities and also builds for athletes villages. While we are happy and very proud of our Formula One Grand Prix here in Melbourne and Victoria, I do think of people down in the Latrobe Valley where there were designated areas. People were going to be hosting sporting teams coming from around the globe and had just about signed on the dotted line to host them there, but actually it fell over and, as we know, will no longer go ahead.

One of the other great things that we have is a world-class organisation and event down in Traralgon in the Latrobe Valley, the AGL Loy Yang Traralgon Junior International tennis. What a wonderful job the member for Nepean did leading off on the bill here. He has played down there and hopefully in the near future will be coming back to re-engage with the tennis community down there. But to Susie Grumley and Graham 'Woofa' Charlton, who run the proceedings down there – it has been going for three decades – this is a wonderful tournament that is on the world stage. It runs just before another great event down here in Melbourne, the Australian Open. A lot of juniors that move through and have won the event there have gone on in the very same year to win the junior Australian Open here in Melbourne. At the moment we are looking for funding to do some upgrades to the facility to make sure that it is on a world-class stage. I know it is only minor compared to the money needed to make sure the Formula One event runs properly, but if we in regional Victoria are going to have these events on a continued basis, we need to make sure that there is funding going into these regional world-class events for tennis, and especially the one in Traralgon, the junior international tennis down there. But as we said from the start, on this side we do not oppose the bill, and we are looking forward to Oscar hitting the town.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (11:59): I would like to start out by saying and expressing just how much Albert Park is loved by locals, and not exclusively by locals but of course by all who visit the park. I think it is important to acknowledge that, and that has only been reinforced through the many conversations that I have had with so many people in the local community. I should say and point out I am a local as well. I live about 7 minutes drive from the park or maybe a 20 minute walk.

A member: In a Formula One?

Nina TAYLOR: No, no. I do want to draw that out through the discussion, because I think it is really important when we are looking at that balance and striking that balance when it comes to the Formula One.

Of course there is a natural water source there that is treasured by community and beautiful birdlife, and actually the birdlife is an aspect that I love most of all. I should note that I will not be able to transact all matters in 10 minutes, but I will seek to do as much as I can. Many people love walking, whether it is with or without a dog or with friends. It can be a social event. The fabulous Albert park run, led by Joanne and Scott, draws hundreds of people week after week, getting fit and enjoying the scenery. Of course there are the sailing and rowing clubs that adore the lake as well, and Albert Park College provide a fantastic program and they really do take advantage of those wonderful water sports, which are truly availed of in our local area.

I should also do a shout-out to the Albert Park community sports and recreation association. They are also incredible advocates on behalf of all the community sports clubs. They are unrelenting for all the right reasons. I work very closely with them, and I respect the integrity with which they transact everything that they do in terms of pushing community sport for all the right reasons. Also, there are the golf clubs and the driving range, respectfully, having had conversations there that are actually ongoing – it is not only with regard to this bill. I know that for many of course there are the physical aspects, but there are the social aspects, the discipline of sport and just enjoying being outdoors and also seeing children – and adults as well – not glued to computer screens. So we can see there are so many wonderful reasons for enjoying the beautiful Albert Park.

I do want to also acknowledge the schools that are on the park. We have Mac.Robertson Girls' High. We also have South Melbourne Park Primary School and St Kilda Park Primary School. No doubt South Melbourne Park Primary School are the ones that would have the closest interaction, if you like, for want of a better word, when it comes to the impacts of the Formula One Grand Prix. I do want to also acknowledge the incredible way not only the schools but also the community do adapt to what is a major event, and I think that is truly to be commended.

I also want to commend the nuance and the very constructive approach that community have taken with regard to raising not only why they love their sports but how they anticipate that they will interact with the grand prix and also their actual experience with the interaction of the grand prix. That has been incredibly important, because it has greatly helped me, not as an individual but as an advocate for community, in being able to assert the various matters and the queries that they have put forward, as I said, in a very constructive way. The minister's office has heard from me many times. I must say I have transacted as much and, to be honest, anything and everything that has been raised to me by community members almost every day, because it is important. That is my job – fighting for community and making sure that through the process of debate on this bill their needs and concerns are taken into account and that we mitigate the impact of the grand prix on the way that they are able to enjoy engaging with the beautiful Albert Park.

There are a couple of points that I want to dive in on in a deeper way, and one is the matter of safety. This certainly is one of the underpinning elements of the legislation that is before us, and I have pushed on that matter in a very assertive way because I think it is fair and reasonable, certainly when we are in the chamber, to transact such matters with integrity.

I have been informed that actually WorkSafe Victoria have raised concerns, and so safety is not merely a light matter to be dismissed, but rather there have been legitimate concerns raised. Certainly, when I am advocating on behalf of my community on the issue of safety, of course safety is another issue that I have to take very seriously, so to merely dismiss it and see it as spin, as I think some may have tried to suggest. But I am not in any way criticising people raising the issue on all sides of that, because it is underpinning certainly the changes that are being brought before the chamber. I just want to

reassure those here and also my community that making sure that the safety concerns raised are founded on actual and legitimate concerns is absolutely paramount. That is why I have very much prosecuted that matter very carefully, because it is highly significant in the debate that we are having today. As I was saying, WorkSafe have raised matters, and I am sure more of that will be discussed in due course.

I just do take a little bit of exception to the Greens political party I think being rather opportunistic. I cannot recall them ever being strident advocates for community sport, and to suddenly be caring about such matters in that way will not be effective. I can see the political angle that they are seeking to work with it, but I just do not give it credence. I think particularly, as we know – do they block housing? Yes. Do they deliver schools? No. Do they deliver anything? I just want to put that little caveat that when strident, opportunistic arguments are put forward that are without accountability of any kind, certainly questions might be raised, and I am raising those questions here and now. Particularly what triggered that, in part, was the discussion about South Melbourne Park Primary School. I certainly have been working very closely with principal Nicole Arnold and the school council not only on matters that might pertain to the grand prix but bigger and broader educational matters pertaining to the school and the infrastructure, so I felt that that was a rather superficial assessment of the matters at hand. I think that the principal and the school council are absolutely incredible advocates on behalf of their school. They care deeply about the students. So I want to give them a shout-out for the work that they do every day – I mean, teachers around the state are doing incredible work. But I just felt that matter was superficial at best as it was discussed in the chamber, when in fact I do liaise carefully with that school and I am really grateful for the advocacy that they put forward on behalf of the students, who they care so deeply about.

There are a couple more points that I do want to make. Something I think just needs to be taken into account with legislation versus the ongoing functionality of the park. If the bill is given assent as drafted, the public access areas for the 2026 race have not yet been determined, and the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and the minister will continue to consider the appropriate public access. The point of me raising that is that is why the incredibly constructive and helpful advocacy on behalf of community has been extremely useful and will continue to be so. I am certainly here for the community, and certainly we should continue to be working together, but of course the minister and the grand prix have to take heed of that – they absolutely have to. I just want to reassure about that with regard to the levers that might be being put in place with the legislation versus the ongoing and continual work with community. That is what is paramount to me as the local member.

I think I am just about out of time, but I have sought to prosecute some of the key matters. I thank the incredible advocates that we have locally for their advocacy. Let us continue to work together.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (12:09): I rise this afternoon to speak on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. As Liberals on this side, of course we are very proud of the fact that the reason we have this bill in the Parliament today is because in fact it was a Liberal government, a proactive Liberal government, that brought this event to the state. I think many of us remember that at the time those opposite and those who recently contributed were trying to stop it. But it was an event that came to Melbourne and to Victoria, and it has been one of the must-not-miss events on the Australian sporting calendar and very, very important to the visitor economy here in the state of Victoria.

Major events and particularly major sporting events in the state of Victoria are critical to our economy, and as the member for Polwarth, of course my electorate includes the Great Ocean Road. The whole Great Ocean Road, from Torquay all the way through to the wonderful Port Campbell and a little bit further along, is in the seat of Polwarth. An electorate like mine benefits greatly from events such as the grand prix, because it brings visitors to our state, it brings rewards to the economy and of course we really rely in our part of the world on the before and after visits, where people who have made the effort to come and watch world-class sporting events such as the grand prix then journey on further and spend some time out in rural and regional Victoria.

To list some of the events that we host in the electorate of Polwarth, we can talk about probably the most famous, the Bells Beach surfing event. It is comparable, really, to the grand prix in the sense that it is elite sportspeople in their field out competing in Victoria and bringing a worldwide audience – people from around the world who want to watch and understand what is going on. It is very important to our economy. In recent times we had the Elite 16 Beach Pro Tour volleyball event on the foreshore at Torquay, another stunning event that brought visitors into our economy and into our region and brought the spotlight of the world. Regularly now we have got the Cadel Evans bike ride. Acting Speaker Walters, I do not know whether you are a bike rider; I am certainly not. But it is certainly an event that brings a whole raft of people into our economy and into our region who really follow the cycling circuit, and that is something we are very proud of. Another big event that we have is of course the Pier to Pub community fundraiser in Lorne. That really works out, and it brings some of the most elite swimmers into the region. That is something we are very proud of in the area. Up to many thousands of people hit the water in the middle of January, and it of course brings a lot of attention and excitement to the region. Other cycling events, the Melbourne to Warrnambool and Amy's Gran Fondo, come to the region – all sorts of major events, and major events are really an important driver to the economy.

It is something that this Parliament needs to take into account and be mindful of when we are talking about making amendments to the grand prix. I guess the concern that the opposition has is that we fear that the local community in and around the grand prix circuit have not been engaged with as well as they could have. There have been concerns raised that it was a good opportunity perhaps for the government to ensure that there be some permanent legacy for having the grand prix there for the local community – a walkover pedestrian access permanently installed across Queens Road, for example, might be one thing the government could have built into the allowed improvements for the area. But the main concern around this is the government's exclusion day period, which I think is moving from seven to 21 days, and what the rationale and reason for that is. While it is not a reason to oppose this bill or to stop this bill, like many things this government proposes and seeks to do, there is not a lot of clarity around it.

It is like, for example, in my own portfolio, the Big Housing Build. The government, this government in particular, goes to some extraordinary lengths sometimes to keep its rationale hidden and away from public scrutiny. For example, in the Big Housing Build we have a situation where the government are going to pull down 10,000 homes, and they are prepared to go to the Supreme Court and spend millions and millions of dollars to hide the rationale as to why they are going to redevelop rather than to let it be clear what the benefits –

Michaela Settle: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, on relevance, I am not sure where housing connects with the grand prix. Could you ask the member to come back.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Iwan Walters): This has been a wideranging debate, and I have been listening carefully to the member for Polwarth's contribution. I will rule on the point of order, member for Polwarth. There is no point of order, but I do encourage the member for Polwarth to remain germane to the bill.

Richard RIORDAN: For the benefit of the member for Eureka, there are probably some public housing towers that will have a fine view of the grand prix, and it is important that those people have a full understanding of when they will not have a view of the grand prix. And so, you know, there is a link in the public housing tower connection.

Getting back to that, the concern we have is that the local community around the grand prix have been left in the dark. Reasonable questions put by the opposition as to what the need is for the extra 14 days you would think are pretty straightforward types of questions, but this government, as in the case of the public housing towers, goes to quite deep lengths to make sure that they do not fully operate in a transparent way so the community understands the rationale. I think it is reasonable that the opposition raised the concerns of locals in the community, as the Labor Party is in fact supposed to represent the

Albert Park region and yet has turned a deaf ear. So we take the responsibility of raising that genuine community concern before the Parliament and of course continue to offer, as we will when the bill goes to the upper house, the government an opportunity to explain more fully what the extra 14 days will deliver.

The grand prix and major events are an important driver for our state. The opposition agrees that we need to continue to progress and develop this event, and from time to time legislation like this may have to come forward to ensure that Victoria puts its best foot forward and continues to provide that world-class event not only to Victorians but to Australia more generally. It provides a wonderful eye to the world for us every March when it comes forward. There are other elements around that space at Albert Park that from time to time we have to balance the event uses of, of course, but we also have to make sure that the local community maintains its amenity and has reasonable access for as much time as possible to the various facilities within that Albert Park precinct, so we support that.

In finishing up my contribution this afternoon, I just wish to just reflect back on the amazing amount of events that we do have in the state and the importance to our local economies of hosting those events. And I would like to say that from time to time in regional Victoria – and I know my colleague the member for Eildon is also at the table today – our large regional events could be better supported by the state government. One of the issues that we have and that I touched on earlier is that the various cycling events – and I know the member for Eildon has also got an economy that is very reliant these days on the cycling economy – actually get pretty poorly funded and supported in providing the necessary road infrastructure that makes the weekend cycling craze and cycling events as safe as they could be. While we support making the grand prix safe for visitors and participants alike, it is also important that if we are going to have a regional events economy, we make sure that the safety of people in regional Victoria is also considered.

I draw your attention to some upcoming cycling events in my own electorate, where roads are blocked off. We have an issue on the Great Ocean Road where a couple of communities, Wye River and Kennett River, will actually be cut off all day. The community there says, ‘Well, okay, we accept that we’re going to have to shut down the Great Ocean Road to domestic traffic’. But there is not a clear plan if a medical emergency or some other accident occurs in these communities where people live. What is the action plan to ensure that people can exit the community safely and without delay? There were a couple of examples in recent years where people with quite serious illnesses found themselves trapped for many, many hours in the community, unable to get away. I think the government has an obligation to, while providing safety and security for the grand prix, apply that same thinking to opportunities at events in rural and regional Victoria.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (12:19): I rise today to speak in strong support of the bill before the house, which amends the Australian Grands Prix Act 1994. Of course the amendments are both practical and forward-looking. They recognise the immense popularity of our Formula One in Australia and worldwide, and they ensure the Australian Grand Prix continues to deliver benefits for the Victorian economy and also for local communities and for the millions of fans who make this event a fixture of our sporting calendar.

But before the member for Polwarth leaves the chamber, I was not aware that Polwarth was the event capital of Victoria until today, so thanks for enlightening me. I must spend more time down there if that is the case and see some of these major events down at Polwarth. I should reassure the member for Polwarth that in any event, if there is an emergency, that is what warning devices are for on emergency vehicles, and they are not allowed to be obstructed from attending to emergencies. So I can assure you and your community that I know from a paramedic’s point of view they will get to those people when they need to get to those people, and the people that run the events will also assist emergency services workers in doing their job.

I want to thank the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events for bringing this forward and delivering many, many major events for Victoria, which of course we should remind those opposite

about, who were quite negative about this state and not being able to attract major events. They said the sky was going to fall in. Well, guess what – how wrong were they? Let me just rattle off a few of the events that we have that are coming up: a multiyear deal for Melbourne to host NFL regular season games from next year; a two-year deal to host the Australian Open golf; the NBA x NBL series where for the first time an NBA team, the New Orleans Pelicans, will play on Australian soil; of course the wonderful Rugby World Cup in 2027, which we all look forward to, and the mighty Wallabies are on their way back; and of course next year the great Neil Diamond musical *A Beautiful Noise*, and that will be a fantastic event also. But those are just a few, let alone our normal regular major events, which I will come to later.

I do want to touch on a bit of a personal reflection, and that is that I will admit that when the grand prix first moved from Adelaide to Melbourne back in 1997, I was very sceptical. There were two reasons: one was Jeff Kennett, and I did protest against the grand prix being brought to Melbourne and in particular being brought to Albert Park. I did not think it was a great idea having it at Albert Park.

Members interjecting.

Steve McGHIE: Well, I can assure everyone I have never been to the grand prix at all, except for the grand prix dinner this year on the Friday night, because I was asked by a minister to attend. But I have never been to the grand prix – it is not my cup of tea. But in the early years I was against it being at Albert Park. I thought it would have been better off located at Sandown, but I have changed my mind. It is an entrenched major event here, and I think Albert Park is the best location for it. It is easier for spectators to get to, and, as we will come to, many, many hundreds of thousands of people attend that race.

It has become synonymous with this city. It is a pillar of Melbourne's identity as the sporting capital of Australia and indeed one of the great sporting capitals of the world, with of course the magnificent AFL Grand Final, the wonderful Spring Racing Carnival – I cannot wait for it to come up shortly – the Australian Open and many, many other major sporting events. Bells Beach and things like that have been referred to – the surfing championships and the great road races that we have. I know in the beautiful town of Buninyong, in the seat of Eureka, we had the Australian road racing championships for 21 years – yes, for 21 years. It has now gone off to Perth, unfortunately, and I hope it is a failure in Perth so it can come back to beautiful Buninyong, but anyway, that is another issue.

The timing of these amendments could not be more significant. Formula One is undergoing a period of unprecedented global growth. From Miami to Singapore, from Las Vegas to Jeddah, new circuits are entering the calendar and of course putting a lot of pressure on the current circuits around the world. Netflix's *Drive to Survive* has opened the sport to a younger generation, which is fantastic, and a more diverse audience are now flocking to the races in numbers never, ever seen before, and sponsorship, broadcasting rights and tourism revenues are all at all-time highs.

It is not just a sport anymore, it is a global entertainment juggernaut, and Melbourne's grand prix has made it that way, has complemented it so much.

For this year's grand prix I went for the first time to the Friday night dinner. I noticed there were a number of opposition members there on the Friday night. I do not know if it was a freebie, but there were plenty of opposition members at the Friday night dinner. I did not see the member for Hawthorn there, but there were a number of others. I know the member for Malvern and the member for Eildon were there. It was a very good night. Going into the event, there were about 100,000 spectators coming out in all their clobber and clothing and things like that, which was amazing. I think someone said that ticket prices for just one particular stand are \$245 a session, and I was thinking: wow. That is dedication if people are going over four days, and then they are dressed up to the nines in their gear. It is fantastic to see. But my first opportunity to attend the grand prix was at the dinner this year, which was a very good dinner, I should say.

Of course all the evidence speaks for itself. In 2025 we witnessed the most attended Australian Grand Prix in history. Over 465,000 people poured into Albert Park across the four days. That makes a massive statement in regard to the growth of this race and how it is entrenched in Melbourne now. Looking ahead, the momentum is only building. In 2026 the Australian Grand Prix will unveil a brand new stand, the Piastrì stand. I think it was the member for Morwell who raised something about Oscar and how wonderful it is that he is leading the championship and what a great driver he is as a young Melbourne boy. But I have got to make reference to some other drivers in this type of sport. We talk about Oscar Piastrì, a Brighton boy. There is James Wharton, who is an F3 driver. He is from Bundoora. I know Brooksy, Minister Brooks, would be quite happy about that local lad and F3 driver. Aiva Anagnostiadis is an F1 Academy –

Brad Rowswell: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I have a high regard for the member for Melton, but to casually refer to a minister of the Crown as ‘Brooksy’ is unparliamentary, and I would encourage you to encourage the member for Melton –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Iwan Walters): I believe the member for Melton corrected himself.

Steve McGhie: I did. That is what I call him outside of the chamber all the time, and it is very hard to forget that. I should say that he owes me four bottles of wine for a bet that we had recently, but anyway, I will collect that shortly.

I cannot forget at the grand prix dinner a young woman, Joanne Cicone, who is a F1 Academy driver also – what a great ambassador for the sport and a great inspiration for the younger generation engaging in this type of sport. But it will be fantastic to see the new stand open next year and people going into the track with the Piastrì stand there.

The bill extends the maximum race period from seven days to 21 days. There have been enough people that have spoken on that. As I said, nearly half a million people went to the race this year. The bill also guarantees access to parts of Albert Park during the extended period – those community spaces. It legislates for public access, so that is important. It also increases the payments to Parks Victoria, and this is another important step. Hosting the grand prix places additional responsibility on Parks Victoria, so both before and after the event the bill increases their funding, ensuring that they can maintain the park to a high standard, supporting both the event and the broader community. It also enables the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to host non-motorsport events, which is important because it means that they can diversify. It allows them to generate new revenue, which is really important, which will reduce the financial burden on the Victorian government and taxpayers of course. It also modernises the governance provisions, allowing acting appointments to the AGPC board.

This is a really good bill. Again, I commend the minister for bringing this bill to the house. There will be many, many financial benefits out of this bill. The grand prix increases Victoria’s gross state product by \$323.9 million, and it delivers an estimated \$3.08 per dollar spent in economic impact. It is a really important bill, and I commend it to the house.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (12:29): I also rise to address the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. We will not be opposing this bill, as has been made clear by previous speakers, and we will not be opposing this bill for a number of reasons. Firstly, we on this side of the house have a very strong connection to the Australian Grand Prix. As soon as I mention the name of the former Premier who instigated it, I wait for government members to have a view on the matter. But the opposition – the coalition; the Liberals and Nationals – do have a stake in the Australian Grand Prix because it was a former Liberal–National government, under the leadership of the then Premier, Jeffrey Gibb Kennett, that brought the Australian Grand Prix to Victoria. And let us be frank: if the Australian Grand Prix was still being hosted by South Australia it would have left Australian shores many, many moons ago. It was only because of the vision and the instigation of the then Liberal Premier, Jeffrey Kennett, that we are still having a worthwhile conversation about the purpose and the impact of the Australian Grand Prix on our community today.

The government argues that the bill has been introduced for safety reasons. It argues the extension of the race period from seven to 21 days is there for safety reasons. We understand that, but we also contend that the government has not actually indicated in any great detail what those specific safety reasons are, so we await the government's response on that specifically. Hopefully, in between this debate in the Assembly and the subsequent debate in the other place in the coming weeks, the government will be more forthcoming with that information.

We support the grand prix. We have a history of supporting the grand prix. We are very pleased that the grand prix has seen a significant rise in attendance from just over 324,000 fans in 2019 to more than 465,000 fans in 2025. That is 43 per cent growth. On this side of the chamber we are champions of Victorians and champions of Victoria, and for that reason any growth in attendance at the grand prix is good for everyone. We think that is a good thing. We think, as the Australian Grand Prix Corporation has contended, the rise in attendance is driving greater operational and infrastructure requirements, and due to that growth the Australian Grand Prix Corporation must undertake more of the critical event build and dismantle activities outside of the official race period. This is what the Australian Grand Prix Corporation is contending. We do not disagree with that and we understand it. But this is the bottom line: we think that the Formula One is something that frankly needs to be jealously guarded. We know that our northern neighbours in New South Wales mounted a strong and unsuccessful bid to steal the grand prix from Melbourne, and if they had got it, we would struggle here in Victoria to get it back. That is just the reality.

We know that France no longer has a grand prix race. We know that just in the weekend ahead there will be the very last Dutch grand prix, despite them having world champions like Max Verstappen. We know that the Barcelona race is moving to Madrid. We know the famous spa circuit is only going to host a race every second year after 2026, and we know that this year was the last race at the famous Imola circuit. So the bottom line is this: Formula One as an organisation will remove races from the calendar.

So I again contend that the Formula One race here in Melbourne must be fiercely and jealously guarded. That does not mean that we on this side of the house contend that a blank cheque should simply be written to the grand prix corporation, and we understand the economic pressures that the Australian Grand Prix Corporation is under. As reported in the *Age* on 18 November 2023 by Chip Le Grand:

Liberty Media, the \$12.4 billion, Colorado-based company that owns Formula 1, pulled off a stunning cash grab in its grand prix contract negotiations with the Victorian government by securing all revenue from the event's most exclusive ticket sales.

Under a previously undisclosed provision within Victoria's contract extension to keep the Australian Grand Prix, the state has agreed to meet the cost of new or substantially refurbished corporate hospitality facilities at the Albert Park track but will forgo all revenue generated within those plush walls.

Tickets to the Paddock Club – Albert Park's \$6000 per head answer to the Flemington Birdcage – this year contributed \$12 million to the bottom line of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC). In 2026, when an expanded Paddock Club is due to be completed and the contractual change comes into force, trackside largesse worth an estimated \$30 million will flow directly to F1.

We understand that the Australian Grand Prix Corporation is under significant economic pressure from the Formula One organisation – we get that. We get that at minimal to no notice the Formula One organisation will change their mind, will realign guardrails, will move goalposts. Equally, we cannot be writing a blank cheque, because any Victorian taxpayer money that is put into the grand prix is in fact that – it is Victorian taxpayer money. It needs to be accounted for in a way that is appropriate and respectful of those hardworking Victorians that contribute their hard-earned taxpayer dollars to the Victorian government coffers, which provide a sustainable resource for events like the Australian Grand Prix. But we are also appreciative of the fact that we must jealously guard this race for the larger and broader economic benefit that it brings our state.

I was also concerned to read in the *Age* newspaper on 26 August 2025:

... the Australian Grand Prix Corporation released the prices for the F1 season opener, with a four-day general admission ticket rising to \$385, a 24 per cent increase from last year.

I think that one of the great strengths of motorsport racing and the grand prix in this state since it was returned here by the former coalition government under the leadership of Jeffrey Kennett all those years ago is that motorsport in this state and in fact in this country has been accessible to punters, because it has been at a price point where Victorians who are interested in it can attend. I am concerned that there has been this massive price increase of 24 per cent from last year, and I think it is incumbent upon the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to demonstrate why that massive cost increase has in fact been the case, because over the last five years a general admission four-day pass has risen from \$189 to \$385, a 103.7 per cent increase. I am concerned by that, and I think we need to do better.

I will end where I began. We will not be opposing this bill. We support the Australian Grand Prix. We do so because it was a former coalition government that brought the Australian Grand Prix to our shores and to our city all those years ago. That visionary leadership of the great then Victorian Liberal Premier Jeffrey Gibb Kennett must be acknowledged. Credit must be given, and if credit will not be given from the government benches, it will certainly be given from the opposition benches.

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (12:39): I am proud to stand here today and speak in favour of the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. Victoria is a state that has built its reputation on being the sporting and major events capital of the world. From the AFL Grand Final to the Boxing Day test, the Australian Open and the Melbourne Cup, we host events that not only capture national attention but draw visitors and investment from right across the globe. These events are part of who we are as Victorians. They showcase our city, boost our economy and bring our communities together. Among these world-class occasions, the Australian Grand Prix stands out as one of the most important weekends in the calendar. It is without doubt one of the single biggest annual events held in Victoria, attracting global television audiences in the millions and drawing fans from every corner of the world to Melbourne. For four days Albert Park becomes the beating heart of international motorsport, with the eyes of the world firmly fixed on our city. This bill is about ensuring that we keep delivering the grand prix at the highest possible standard. The legislation makes modest but important changes that will help the Australian Grand Prix Corporation continue its work to make this event such a success. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events for his leadership on this legislation and for his continued commitment to strengthening Victoria's position as the home of major events.

In 2025 the grand prix increased Victoria's gross state product by \$323.9 million, generated an estimated \$3.08 in economic impact for the state for every dollar invested by the Victorian government and supported an estimated 1631 annual full-time equivalent jobs through roles such as event construction and hospitality. I would like to also acknowledge the amazing work that this government has done to make sure that the event stays in Melbourne until at least 2037. As much as Sydney might want it, we are not giving it up, and we do it better than they ever could. The main aspect of this bill is that it extends the maximum amount of time that the race period can be declared under the act to allow for more time to set up and disassemble the necessary infrastructure needed for this important event.

Since the Australian grand prix returned to Melbourne in 1996, the popularity of the race has only grown, with larger crowds and more support categories, such as the Formula Two and Formula Three, needing more infrastructure and resources for the event to go ahead smoothly. The Australian Grand Prix Corporation has made it clear that it needs more time to set up for the grand prix, as critical components are built weeks before. The race period, as defined in this act, refers to the time period in which the Australian Grand Prix Corporation manages and controls most of Albert Park to prepare and run the grand prix. This period is in place for just seven days, and the changes in this bill will increase that time to 21 days.

Many people who do not watch the Formula One might not know this, but fans attend the event from Thursday before the race day, and there are support categories, such as the Supercars and the Formula Two, that run from then leading up to the main race. This means that, in actuality, there is less than a week for the grand prix corporation to set up an event that has hundreds of thousands attending. It is just not sustainable for the amount of temporary infrastructure that is used in this event to be set up in only a few days without compromising cost or safety. These changes will apply for next year's event if this legislation passes Parliament. They are sensible and they allow us to make sure that the Australian Grand Prix is the best race in the Formula One calendar.

Another change that this bill implements is that it enables the AGPC to host non-motorsports events to increase its ability to generate revenue to help reduce the Victorian government contribution. The amendments require applications from the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to host non-motorsport events to be provided six months in advance of the proposed event and contain essential operations and security information. The minister must consider any effects on the committee of management and tenants of Albert Park if an event is proposed to be held there. This bill also increases the legislated payment to the committee of management for Albert Park, Parks Victoria, in recognition of the increased footprint of the grand prix and the additional work required from it to help stage the event, including tenant liaison and park maintenance and upkeep.

The annual payment will rise from \$100,000 to \$200,000. In addition, the bill allows this compensation to be increased through the regulations. Finally, this bill updates the terminology used in the act, such as gendered language, makes changes relating to grand prix insignia and modernises governance settings.

I would like to use the last few minutes that I have to touch on an adjacent topic while I am speaking on this bill, and that is the great space that is Sandown raceway in Springvale in my electorate. I am very proud to have the raceway, which provides similar benefits to my local community and local economy. Although not to the same scale as the grand prix, Sandown is an icon in its own right – a venue with deep history and a place where many Victorians have made memories, whether it be through motorsport, community gatherings or other events. The reality is that motorsport is an expensive sport to get involved in and that many people who want to participate do not have the ability to do so. That is why I find it so valuable that we have accessible locations where Victorians can enjoy high-quality motorsport practically in their own backyards. Sandown does not just host elite-level racing, it also provides a space where grassroots participation and community engagement can flourish. I had the pleasure to tour the Sandown raceway site with Motorsport Australia officials recently, and it is such a wonderful facility in the heart of my community – a real hub of activity.

Did you know that Sandown could have been a contender for the grand prix but was not deemed good enough by the Kennett government? I grew up in earshot of the Sandown raceway, so I could hear every Sunday the cars going around on race day. I could hear them training. It was fantastic. My mum might not have liked it that often, but it reminded me of just how brilliant my electorate is and how brilliant the area where I grew up in was and still is. Unfortunately, and I would have been in my early teens at the time, the late Ron Walker made some comments about Sandown that if it was to be the place for the grand prix, then for those arriving by helicopter – because often it draws in people from around the world – it was probably not the best site; the aerial view was probably not the best. I would tell Ron Walker if I could that he is so wrong, because my electorate and that Sandown area in Springvale is an amazing space; whether it be on foot or perhaps from the air, it is an amazing space. So it was a missed opportunity. The grand prix could have been at Sandown. It is not too late. Albert Park is a great space, and the member for Albert Park is a great ambassador for the grand prix there too. But I will still think of Sandown Raceway as an alternative to Albert Park, in the near future perhaps – maybe down the track, no pun intended.

Anyway, I move on. In the modern day social groups are losing membership, and this is a global issue which I am sure everyone in this chamber has seen firsthand in their communities. Whether it is sports groups, social clubs or religious institutions, membership of social organisations is falling, and that is

why it is events like this that bring people together. They help people connect, they bring in fans and they bring in people from all over the world to form connections over sport. We are a sporting city, and we will continue to support major events in this city.

Again I would like to thank the minister for the work on this bill and reinforce my support for this legislation and the amazing event that is the Australian Grand Prix, whether it be in Albert Park or whether they decide to bring it down to Sandown. I commend this bill to the house.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (12:49): I am very pleased to rise and speak on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. It has been mentioned previously but it is worth mentioning again that this event was secured for Victoria through the good work of the Honourable Jeffrey Gibb Kennett, then Premier, who came to office restoring the hope and optimism of this state after the malaise of the Cain–Kirner later years. Whilst there were certainly some good things done under that government in the early years, by the early 1990s it had clearly lost its way, and it was the good work of the Kennett government to secure this event, which we need to hold on to. I think it is a common view across the chamber and throughout the community that it is important. It is a marquee event in Victoria's calendar of major events. It is a global event. It gives Victoria and Melbourne in particular the chance to shine on the international stage, and it is important to recognise and honour in a genuine way the concerns and respond to the concerns of locals in the Albert Park community in particular and the broader concerns of some Victorians about the race. But the overwhelming view of Victorians is that we strongly support this event and want to see it remain here for many years.

The comments I want to make on the bill this afternoon just touch briefly on matters around the ability to extend the designated race area and the designated race period, and like others before me, I think they are sensible changes which the Australian Grand Prix Corporation needs to make in order to make sure that we can continue to hold the event and that we can grow the event and build ticket sales and other sources of revenue over the years ahead. Whilst you have a contract with Liberty Media, I think it is known across the world that Liberty Media is a very skilful negotiating entity and a very powerful entity, and you have to work hard to retain the events that it agrees to contract out. So we will do our bit as proud Victorians to make sure that none of our competitor states or any other jurisdiction can compete for the event. As long as those designations and declarations around the race period and the race area and public access zones are done sensitively, so people's rights are respected but the grand prix corporation is able to deliver on its objectives and discharge its functions, they are strongly supported, and I encourage that.

What I really wanted to talk about are the challenges that lie ahead for the grand prix corporation where the expansion of its activities is concerned. Just very briefly, in terms of its latest published financial data, we have a corporation which in relation to the Formula One grand prix itself turns over, according to its 2024 figures, around \$116 million. Most of that was ticket sales of a bit over \$90 million. The total expenses for the 2024 year were around about \$220 million, from memory, which meant that there was a government investment, or a taxpayer subsidy, depending on which view of the world you want to take – it is all public money – of about \$102 million. Now, if that is what is required to make sure that the event is successful and we retain it, with all of the direct and indirect benefits that flow from that – and there clearly are many hundreds of millions of dollars by way of indirect benefits – then that is a good thing.

But what I wanted to talk about in particular are two things. The first thing is that with an event of this nature it is important in the same way that the International Olympic Committee protects its insignia and its intellectual property, so too does the Australian Grand Prix Corporation. So those changes in the bill which relate to the expansion of its activities and functions beyond motorsport events and Formula One events, so designated, mean that necessarily the insignia requirements, conditions and prohibitions and those which relate to intellectual property will, you have to assume, I think quite reasonably, extend now beyond the area and the events themselves to any other activity that the grand prix corporation chooses to hold, subject to securing the approval of the minister.

I can understand the arguments for why it wants to do that, and we are supportive of that. But the point I want to make is that there does need to be a recognition in government and in the corporation and in its partners that there is a risk and that there does need to be a recognition in government and in the corporation and in its partners that there is a risk, as the grand prix corporation extends its functions into those activities that are not directly related to or constitute motorsport events or Formula One events, of what I will loosely call crowding out, where the corporation can conduct activities with all of the protections that will necessarily surround its intellectual property and the insignia relating to the event and extend that in a way which runs the risk of pushing out other activity that may already occur or that we might want otherwise to occur in the economy. There is that risk of crowding out, which I think needs to be taken very seriously. I know the grand prix corporation is led by a former member of this house, Mr Martin Pakula, who I rate and respect enormously, and Travis Auld. They are both two very good operators, and I am very happy to acknowledge their abilities and that they will manage that.

The other point I want to make relates to what I would call the investment mandate and the portfolio strategy that now will need, in my view, to apply to how those activities are conducted, because the extension of the grand prix corporation's activities beyond motorsport events and Formula One activities means that there is always this tension about what core business is, and core business for the corporation is delivering these two global events. If it is going to extend and use its balance sheet, which has an enormous value, and its reputation to conduct other major events, it will not be long before those other events constitute a very significant part of its operating results. So if you think about it, just in terms of the Formula One, you have a turnover in terms of revenue of about \$116 million, as I said earlier. If you are conducting an ever-expanding suite of commercial activities that are non-motorsport activities or non-Formula One activities, they will before long constitute a very significant part of the grand prix corporation's operating activities.

What I would hope that the government would do is ensure that, working with the grand prix corporation, there is a clear understanding of what the investment strategy and the portfolio activities of the grand prix corporation are going to be in the years ahead, because we want these two events, in particular the two grands prix – the motorsport and the Formula One grand prix – to be always successful year in and year out. But if, for example, the grand prix corporation is going to be holding concerts, exhibitions and other major events that will see it turning over many tens of millions of dollars in the years ahead, that will start to constitute a fairly significant impact on its commercial activities for the better, we would hope and assume, but it does mean that it is going to face increasing pressure to ensure that those activities (1) do not crowd out other activity, because what is the point of that? And one thing that is missing from the bill is any kind of explicit nexus between what those other activities might be. So you have got a corporation that has been very successful, in my view; you have now got a bill which is saying that subject to ministerial approval you can engage in whatever other activities you want. Now, I do not suggest for a moment the grand prix corporation is going to be reckless or cavalier in that decision, but it means that it can conduct any type of activity with the possibility that it starts to intrude upon and crowd out those activities.

So the point I would finish on is I think it is very important for the government and the corporation to ensure that there is a clear understanding, even if it is not set out in the bill itself, that those extra activities – what I would call the extracurricular activities – bear some connection and are not just an attempt to drive revenue at the risk of deterring investment in other parts of the Victorian economy or operating unfairly on organisations that for a long time conducted activities at the time of the grand prix corporation and that there is always an understanding that any other activities that go beyond motorsport and Formula One activities are, in practice – even if it is not set out explicitly – connected to its core business mission. Otherwise, we do not oppose the bill.

Sitting suspended 12:59 pm until 2:02 pm.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

*Members***Minister for Environment***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 Agriculture will answer questions for the portfolios of environment and outdoor recreation and the Minister for Creative Industries will answer questions for the portfolio of tourism, sport and major events.

*Questions without notice and ministers statements***Retail workplace safety**

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Premier. Violent incidents at Woolworths stores have risen more than 26 per cent over the past year. Shockingly, Victorian stores account for half of this spike. This has prompted Woolworths to introduce body-worn cameras for staff. Why are retail workers now forced to wear body cams because crime is so out of control under this government?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:03): Every worker deserves the right to feel safe at work, and that is why our government is bringing legislation to the Parliament to strengthen protection for retail workers and giving Victoria Police more powers to crack down on offenders. When it comes to giving police more powers to crack down on offending, that is why, through our bail reforms, the toughest bail laws in the country, we have also increased penalties, particularly around if you are caught stealing –

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. This is about young workers wearing body cams now. I would ask you to ask her to come back to the question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was not debating the question. The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: That is why, under our bail reforms – and I do acknowledge that those have been strengthened even further this week – it makes it even tougher for repeat offenders, particularly for those who are caught stealing whilst already on bail. We will continue to back and support the work of Victoria Police every day. We will continue to give them the tools, the powers and the resources they need to keep everyone in our community safe, and that includes retail workers. As I have said, we will also strengthen police powers to keep retail workers safe from harm.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:04): Why has it been 467 days since the Premier announced laws to protect retail workers and nothing has happened?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Nepean is warned. The member for Narre Warren North is warned.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:05): I was proud to stand at the Labor Party state conference last year to announce that we are strengthening police powers to protect retail workers from offending. I want to thank the shop, distributive and allied union, which worked with our government. As a former member of that union and as someone who worked in the retail industry, who worked the check-outs for seven years, I was proud to work with the union.

Sam Groth: On a point of order on relevance, Speaker, the Premier put out a press release in May last year on these laws, and they have still done nothing.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: Of course, this question can only be asked because we are committed to strengthening support for retail workers. I note a member from the other place is in the gallery today who has been leading the consultation –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Cranbourne! Members will be removed without warning.

Bridget Vallance: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question is: why has nothing happened yet? On relevance, I would ask you to ask the Premier. And also the Premier should not be referring to people in the gallery.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: I note that as one of the members for South-Eastern Metro who is committed to supporting Victorians and backing Victorians, that member has been leading consultation, and we will be bringing legislation to the Parliament this year.

The SPEAKER: I caution members that it is not acceptable to acknowledge people in the gallery.

Ministers statements: Victoria Police deaths

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:07): Today I rise to acknowledge the community of Porepunkah, who right now are living, as we know, under the long and heavy shadow of unthinkable tragedy. I want to acknowledge for the community of Porepunkah that life is far from easy right now, that nothing is ordinary, that every part of their daily life is touched by fear, touched by uncertainty and, for so many, touched by grief. As anyone who has lived in a community like Porepunkah knows, when tragedy strikes it is never just one family or one workplace who is touched and therefore grieves. Grief in a town like this is never contained; it spreads like smoke through the air, it ripples outwards and it touches everyone, because communities like Porepunkah are built on closeness. They are built on neighbours who watch out for each other, on families who celebrate together and also on people who shoulder each other's burdens in the hardest of times.

When tragedy strikes, it does not stop at one doorstep, it reaches into every home on every street and into every family. That closeness, that sense of togetherness, is what makes the bush so strong, and when this is over it is what will carry Porepunkah and every town in the north-east touched by this tragedy through the weeks, the months and the years ahead. I want them to know that they will not carry it alone. Our government, this Parliament and every single Victorian stand with Porepunkah. We stand too with Victoria Police. We stand with those families and those emergency services who are out there again today in the cold, in the rain, in dangerous conditions, who are working day and night to see justice delivered and also to keep this beautiful community safe and indeed every corner of this great state safe.

Tobacco control

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:09): My question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. Since March 2023 there have been well over 140 firebombings of Victorian tobacco shops. Just last night another tobacco store, on Watton Street in Werribee, was rammed by a four-wheel drive before being firebombed. After years of inaction and hundreds of firebombings, why does Victoria continue to have not one compliance officer?

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (14:10): I thank the member for Caulfield for his question. I am not the minister responsible for the matters that the member for Caulfield has raised. Minister Erdogan in the other place is responsible for those matters. We set up the tobacco regulator. That question is best directed to Minister Erdogan.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Finance will come to order. The minister for public transport will come to order. The member for Sunbury can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Sunbury withdrew from chamber.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:10): As the minister responsible for this in this place, it has been 289 days since the Premier announced laws –

Members interjecting.

David SOUTHWICK: Are any of you responsible for anything really?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Women can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Minister for Women withdrew from chamber.

David SOUTHWICK: It has been 289 days since the Premier announced laws to crack down on illicit tobacco stores. It is another 157 days before just 14 inspectors are due to hit the beat. New South Wales has 48 compliance officers right now. How many more firebombings will occur before this government actually does something?

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (14:12): I appreciate the member for Caulfield is trying to quickly recover from some very sloppy homework –

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Brighton withdrew from chamber.

Nick STAIKOS: but I can assure the house that neither Consumer Affairs Victoria nor the Department of Government Services is responsible for tobacco regulation.

Ministers statements: Victoria Police deaths

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (14:12): While some in this place have sought to focus on conspiracy theories and fringe voices, I rise today to acknowledge Victorians who have shown their support and gratitude for the men and women of Victoria Police, who work tirelessly to keep our community safe. Our police have been touched by an overwhelming tragedy, the impact of which is felt by all Victorians, and we have seen our community unite behind Victoria Police. Stations across the state have been inundated with cards, chocolates and flowers. Wreaths have been laid at the police memorial on St Kilda Road, and last night buildings were lit up blue and flags flown at half-mast to honour our police. Many of us have seen the moving footage of the impromptu guard of honour of police honouring their fallen colleagues. I know Police Association Victoria secretary Wayne Gatt has also been up north-east, where he has been for several days visiting stations, talking to members and ensuring they have the support that they need. Victoria Police Legacy have established a remembrance fund to support the families of those officers that have been lost as a result of this unspeakable crime, and Victorians have given generously already. At its core, politics is about people, and people across our state are hurting, from Porepunkah to Stonehaven and in all our other towns and suburbs, and they are the laserlike focus of our government.

Victoria Police have lost two of their own, Detective Leading Senior Constable Neal Thompson and Senior Constable Vadim De Waart; another is recovering in hospital. It was a privilege, alongside the Premier and Chief Commissioner of Police Bush, to spend some time today with Mr Thompson's wife Lisa, also a serving officer of Victoria Police. We pay our deepest respects to these officers and their families, and we wish our police members who continue to hunt a dangerous fugitive and armed offender every success. We want them to stay safe as they do that and as they continue to keep the

people of the north-east safe in their work. Police often see people when they are at their most vulnerable and on their most difficult days, and they make a difference. In recent days we have seen our community unite behind our police during one of their most difficult times, and it is making a difference.

Health system

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:15): My question is to the Minister for Health. The minister has claimed that all category 1 patients are seen within 30 days, yet Sherri from Hoppers Crossing had to wait nine months for a colonoscopy following her positive bowel screen despite being triaged as a category 1 patient. Why is the minister claiming that 100 per cent of urgent category 1 patients are being seen within 30 days when Sherri's case clearly shows that this is not true?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:15): I thank the member for her question. I am not going to comment on an individual case in this house. However, if the member wishes to share details with me, and of course with the consent of Sherri, then I am happy to follow up her situation. The Allan Labor government has always reported our health data. We have made it public, and we have always made sure that it is available for public scrutiny. The facts of the matter are this: the data, as is reported, shows that all category 1 surgeries have been completed within the clinically recommended time. These are not decisions –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, the standing orders dictate that the minister must be factual. This matter was reported in the *Age* newspaper and is available on the public record.

The SPEAKER: It is an expectation that members on their feet, no matter what contribution they are making, are factual.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I rely on the data that is collected by the Victorian health statistics organisation, and as I have said, I am very happy to follow up this case as raised by the member. These categories, by the way, are not determined by politicians or by journalists or indeed, I have to say, by the patients themselves but by their treating clinicians. Treating clinicians determine whether it is category 1, category 2 or category 3. The member for Lowan, as a former healthcare worker, should know herself that these are clinical decisions. I have already indicated in relation to the case that she has raised that I am happy to follow up and get back to her.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:18): How many other patients like Sherri, who are categorised as needing urgent treatment within 30 days, are waiting beyond this clinically recommended time?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:18): As I have already indicated, the most recent health data that has been released demonstrates that in the last financial year our clinicians, our hardworking surgeons and theatre nurses and hospital staff, delivered a record 212,705 planned surgeries. It has never been achieved before, and this is as a consequence of the hard work of those clinicians. One hundred per cent of our category 1 surgeries were completed within the clinically recommended time –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, again, anyone on their feet is required to be factual. We have got an example available that shows that it is not 100 per cent, and I ask you to invite the minister to be factual in her response.

The SPEAKER: The minister will continue her contribution.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: The data also demonstrates that the time to treat category 2 and category 3 patients continues to reduce. Indeed we saw a reduction of five days for category 2 and 25 days for category 3 patients. So under the Allan Labor government and our record investment the time to wait for surgery is coming down.

Ministers statements: community safety

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:20): I rise to update the house on the Allan Labor government’s anti-vilification laws. These are landmark laws, nation-leading, to protect all Victorians from hate – whoever you are, whoever you love and whoever you pray to. It sends a clear and powerful message: in our state, there is no room for hate, and every Victorian deserves to feel safe and to belong. These laws were shaped by listening – listening to multicultural communities, to faith leaders, to people who have carried the scars of vilification. Their voices guided us, their hopes inspired us and their concerns sharpened our resolve, and today and every day we stand with them hand in hand.

But let us be clear: while Labor stands with our diverse communities, others do not. Others choose not to stand up against hate. They had the chance to do so. Instead they seek to sow division and fan the flames of hate, inventing excuses on why they will not support these laws. This weekend the multicultural gala will bring communities together in a celebration of our diversity and strength. Many members of this house will be there. But I say this: it is not enough to turn up for the photo. You have to show up when it counts and call it out for what it is. Tomorrow is Wear It Purple Day, a day when we stand with our LGBTIQ+ people and affirm their right to be proud, safe and supported, and our new laws are part of this commitment.

The Allan Labor government has a vision for our state, one where every Victorian is welcomed, safe and supported, where difference is celebrated, where communities are safe and where unity triumphs over hate and division. This is the Victoria we believe in.

Emma Kealy interjected.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Lowan just used unparliamentary language to insult me, and I found it deeply offensive. I ask that you ask her to withdraw her comments that were made to me across the table.

The SPEAKER: Member for Lowan, did you make an unparliamentary comment across the table? I will review the footage.

Gambling reform

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:22): My question is to the Premier. Over two years ago former Premier Daniel Andrews stood next to a grandmother who had lost just about everything because of poker machines and announced landmark reforms to reduce harm from gambling. Yet this week it was revealed that Labor is walking back these reforms by not including mandatory precommitment limits in their carded play trial, and the trial also keeps getting delayed. Tim Costello said Labor’s current approach ‘simply reflects a strategy that panders to the gambling industry and is all designed to delay, delay, delay’. Premier, we all know poker machines ruin lives. Why is the Labor government walking away from these commitments to gambling reform?

Michaela Settle interjected.

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

Member for Eureka withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:23): In acknowledging the member for Melbourne’s question, I will have to reject the conclusion that she made at the end of that question, because our government does remain committed to strengthening the regime around gaming machines in this state. We have already demonstrated significant reform, recognising that problem gambling for some is a significant addiction. It causes significant harm and does need to be addressed. I do want to acknowledge the work of the minister for roads. During her time as the minister with that portfolio responsibility, significant reforms were implemented – reforms that now see gaming venues required to close between 4 am and 10 am every single day. There has been a slowing of the spin rates of

machines. There has also been a reduction in the amount of cash that can be withdrawn from ATMs in venues. And also, if I recall correctly, we have stopped the use of cheques being cashed at venues.

This demonstrates significant reform to date, but we do acknowledge that there is more to do, which is why – and we have been very clear on this – we are working with industry to deploy the latest technology to continue to ensure that we are dealing with the issues that problem gamblers face but also ensure that when we can bring about changes they will work and they will address the harm that is caused by problem gambling. I say all of that in the context of what I think the member was referring to of course, which is legislation that is primarily focused around implementing reforms at Crown. We will continue to work with that venue in terms of addressing problem gambling, as we are doing at venues right across the state.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:25): Premier, last year Victorians lost a record \$3.14 billion on the pokies. That is a new record, so whatever reforms have been introduced cannot be working too well if Victorians are losing more on the pokies than ever before. I have to say it is hard to believe that Labor is serious about pokies reform when we have had a carded play trial that is significantly delayed. Now setting loss limits before someone plays the pokies will not be mandatory, making the scheme less effective, and there is still no plan to make that scheme statewide, and Crown are getting an extra two-year extension before they have to meet the rules. So shouldn't Victorians just conclude that Labor continues to allow the gambling industry to water down pokies reform so they can keep up their record profits?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:26): I must say I am more than a little disappointed in the member for Melbourne's representation on this matter, because it is not just incorrect, it is creating an ongoing level of misinformation that gets circulated in the community that does even further harm. It does not matter who it is in this place, we come with the responsibility to provide accurate information. We remain committed to dealing with those challenges that problem gamblers face every day. As I said in my previous answer to the substantive question, closing venues for that period of time – for that 6 hours from 4 am to 10 am every single day – has had a significant impact in breaking that cycle of problem gambling. We remain committed to reforms, and I hope that the Greens political party can find it within their capacity to join with us in an accurate way on driving this change.

Ministers statements: Christian College Geelong bus crash

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:27): I rise to update the house on the tragic events that happened at Stonehaven. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of the Geelong community and all members, particularly the parents of the young girl Milla Killeen. She died yesterday. Her parents would have sent her off to school, and she died on the Hamilton Highway when her bus rolled over. My deepest sympathies go out to Milla's parents, family members, friends and fellow students during this heartbreaking time. I spoke with Christian College Geelong principal Dr Mathilda Joubert yesterday. She described Milla as a beautiful person with an infectious personality and a talented basketballer who had only recently represented her college at the state basketball championships. Milla was a treasured member of the college, and her loss, as I know, is being deeply felt by all the students and staff.

It is a very big school in the Geelong region, Christian College Geelong. There are some five campuses around Geelong, the Bellarine Peninsula and the Surf Coast, and I want to acknowledge the members of Parliament – the members for Geelong, Lara, Bellarine and South Barwon – who I know have all been deeply impacted by this tragedy.

The Department of Education is onsite now at Geelong Christian College. There is a team of multidisciplinary psychologists, counsellors and allied health professionals helping the school and all the school community get through this tragedy. We will continue these supports right through as long as we need to and make sure that we continue to support this school in need during this time.

I do want to pay particular thanks to the first responders and emergency services. You can only imagine what they confronted when this bus rolled with the young people and the students. The 20 minutes before help arrived must have felt like a lifetime for those young people in distress. I can only imagine the scenes that they confronted. Equally I want to acknowledge University Hospital Geelong and the Royal Children's Hospital for all of their support.

Grief and trauma ripple right through a community, but one thing I do know is that this makes it a time for the Education State to come together. These recent tragic events remind us of the importance of coming together during a time of need.

Western Highway duplication

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Six people have died on the Western Highway near Ararat this year on a section of road that was supposed to be fully duplicated by 2020. When will the duplication project begin?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:30): I thank the member for his question on a project that I know is of great importance to many in that region. It has indeed been an area that has seen, as you have outlined, a significant number of incidents and accidents over the years. That is why we made the commitment to duplicating that section of road. Construction of the project has unfortunately had to be paused while Major Road Projects Victoria undertakes a number of planning matters. There are multiple issues, including court challenges, that have led to longer construction times for that project. Also important planning and environment management work on the project has continued, including of course the identification of certain trees of significance, a matter that I know the member opposite will be well familiar with. We are working closely with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation to finalise a new cultural heritage management plan – CHMP, as we know them. That work is progressing well, and we hope to have more to say about that in due course. I would, though –

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order on the question of relevance, Speaker, these are the exact same answers that we got from the former minister two years ago. We are asking for a date.

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

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: I also wanted to note, before I was interrupted there in giving what I thought was a very sincere and factual response to the member's question, respecting the time that it has taken to work through these issues, that my colleague the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and I have worked together, and she has delivered a series of interim safety measures along that section of road ahead of the works continuing on the duplication, including, for example, the introduction of a safer speed limit of 80 kilometres an hour, as well as arranging for the installation –

Bridget Vallance: On a point of order, Speaker, notwithstanding all of that, on relevance, this is about when the project will start.

The SPEAKER: Points of order will be made succinctly. Members who make points of order that are not succinct and do not go to a point of order will be sat down. The minister was being relevant to the question.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: That is right. We will also be installing some additional signs and line marking in the area over the coming weeks to raise driver awareness about the high-risk nature of this section of road. That work is imminent, and that work in terms of the line marking will be taking place over coming weeks.

I do want to give a particular shout-out to my great colleague the member for Ripon, whose advocacy on behalf of her community has been profound and strong on this matter, and she has been a partner in the work of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and me to implement some of these interim

safety measures while we work through some of those challenges, which will enable us to get on with the duplication of that section of road.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:34): The government's Big Build website highlights that in the past 10 years to December there have been 174 crashes on the highway between Ballarat and Stawell, including 16 fatalities and 105 people seriously injured. This does not include the six fatalities this year. What is the revised completion date for the duplication project?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:34): To clarify, were you just referencing the Ararat to Stawell section or the Buangor to Ararat section?

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your guidance. I thought the idea of question time was for us to ask them questions.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Consumer Affairs can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Minister for Consumer Affairs withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: There is an opportunity for clarification. However, the minister can answer as the minister wishes.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: I do appreciate that it has been some time since those opposite have had to deliver a project and that therefore distinguishing between projects can sometimes be a challenge.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Evelyn withdrew from chamber.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: They are, let us face it, having a bit of a stinker of a day when it comes to asking questions.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question. Let me be very clear: the substantive question was about –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mildura can leave the chamber for an hour. The member for Thomastown can leave the chamber for an hour and a half.

Members for Mildura and Thomastown withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: I ask members to make points of order succinctly. It is not an opportunity to make a statement to the house.

Danny O'Brien: Speaker, the minister is debating the question. The substantive question –

The SPEAKER: That is all you need to say, Leader of the Nationals.

Danny O'Brien: Speaker, I am entitled to make a point of order.

The SPEAKER: You have made the point of order. You have said that the minister is debating the question. That is the point of order.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your guidance on being sat down without being able to make an entire point of order, yet now apparently the minister can direct you to clarify the question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I advise members to read the standing orders. Leader of the Nationals, you made your point of order around debating. It is not an opportunity during a point of order to add further to that point of order. If you wish to make a further point of order, I invite you to do so.

Danny O'Brien: I would like to make a further point of order now, Speaker. Under what standing order are ministers able to ask opposition members to clarify a question?

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: Of course the point I was trying to make in asking for clarification from the member was that he was actually in his substantive question referring to a different project than in his supplementary question, so there are questions about whether that is related. Nevertheless, I will answer it. I have answered the original question about the Buangor to Ararat phase of the project. In terms of the Ararat to Stawell phase of the project, it is currently progressing well in planning, and there are a number of activities that have taken place on that, things like – *(Time expired)*

Ministers statements: community safety

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:38): Every member of this Parliament enjoys an enormous privilege, and too we carry an important responsibility not just to lead but to bring communities together, to bring people together, to stand against the kind of hate that festers on the fringes and to push back against the poison that corrodes trust, truth and safety in our community. And in a week like this – a harrowing, tragic week – Victorians expect us to rise to that responsibility. That is the least that they should expect. Here we represent communities – not conspiracies, not fantasies, not hatred dressed up as debate. That is why my government strengthened the anti-hate laws to make it clear that incitement of hate, division and contempt has no place in our state.

That is why whenever hatred and division appear in the news, online and on our streets we call it out, and what happens here under this roof is no different. We call it out every time conspiracy rears its disgusting head, whether it is standing with abusive signs on the steps of this Parliament; inciting fear in multicultural communities, which strengthen our state; or spreading conspiracy in the Legislative Council that demeans this Parliament and endangers the communities we represent.

There is no dignity in silence, and this Parliament must set the standard, because when we speak with conviction here we give Victorians the confidence to do the same. And Victorians expect every member in this place on all sides to meet that standard. Anyone willing to tolerate that filth in their actions, their policies or their party room diminishes not only themselves but the dignity of this place.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Speaker, I seek some guidance with regard to the point of order made by the Leader of the Nationals earlier. He was stopped part way through. I refer you to *Rulings from the Chair*: 'Point of order must be stated before background information given'. The Leader of the Nationals did not have the opportunity to give background information, so I seek clarification if there has been a new ruling from the Chair in this regard.

The SPEAKER: I am happy to take that on notice, member for Eildon.

Constituency questions

Caulfield electorate

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:42): (1270) My constituency question is to the Premier. Premier, organised crime figures such as Kazem 'Kaz' Hamad, deported in 2023 after serving an eight-year jail term, have left behind networks that continue to wreak havoc on Victoria. Illegal tobacco has fuelled violent turf wars, with around 140 shops firebombed across Melbourne. ASIO director-general Mike Burgess has also warned that since the Hamas 7 October attack extremist activities in Australia have shifted from protests to direct targeting of people, businesses and places of worship. He confirmed that some of the crimes were linked to offshore direction, including Iran's Revolutionary Guard, designed to undermine Australia's social cohesion. Here in Victoria this has meant not just

tobacco firebombings but terrorist attacks on the Jewish community, including the firebombing of the Adass synagogue. The government promised to tackle this crisis some 467 days ago. What measures are the government going to take to keep the Jewish community safe?

Ripon electorate

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (14:43): (1271) My question is for the Minister for Government Services. Minister, how many new and upgraded mobile towers have now been delivered across Ripon as part of the Connecting Victoria program? Our Labor government is tackling mobile and internet black spots head on. After 10 years of neglect by the Liberals and Nationals in Canberra in fixing connectivity issues in the regions, we are getting on with it. We have just built new broadband towers in Maryborough East and West, Skipton and Lexton, and there are more to come, with projects in Clunes, Daisy Hill, Talbot and Waterloo to be completed next year. It is all part of Labor's work to deliver more than 1300 mobile and broadband projects across the state, with over 900 of them in rural and regional Victoria. We are delivering real outcomes for Ripon and the regions, unlike those opposite.

Murray Plains electorate

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:44): (1272) My question is to the Minister for Education on behalf of a constituent who asked me why his child and neighbouring children are being denied safe access to a school bus to get them to and from Kerang each day. These children have to cross a 100-kilometre-an-hour-rated busy section of the Murray Valley Highway every day to catch the school bus, which is dangerous for young primary school students. My constituent has asked the Kerang Technical High School, which is the bus coordinator in the area, to submit a form 9 to have the bus route returned to its original route on Flood Lane at Reedy Lake, which would shorten the bus route by 3.5 k and eliminate the necessity for these young children to cross a busy highway, but has had no response. I have personally visited the site and can see the common sense in the proposal. I cannot understand why this issue cannot be resolved so these children have safe access to bus travel to attend school in Kerang.

Preston electorate

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (14:45): (1273) My question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and my question is: what steps will the minister take to ensure the safe regulation of e-bikes following the proposal to temporarily ban their use on trains due to the safety risks posed by large-capacity lithium ion batteries? I think e-bikes and indeed e-scooters are vital to the future of our state and city and particularly areas like Preston and Reservoir. They extend what might be traditional bike trips or walking trips, they of course enhance the benefits of public transport and they allow suburban and neighbourhood activity centres to serve a larger group of people, and they do all of that in a way that is more efficient than cars because of their smaller mass. They reduce congestion, they reduce parking pressure and they link better to public transport. They have of course the active transport mental health benefits of getting out in the open air, and they are more energy-efficient and more emissions-efficient. We recognise the very significant safety concerns that do exist, and we thank the minister for her work to resolve those safety concerns so we can have the benefits of e-bikes and e-scooters safely.

South-West Coast electorate

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (14:46): (1274) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Why are schoolchildren not afforded the same legal protections under road rule 79A as roadside workers and emergency responders? Road rule 79A rightly requires drivers to slow down to 40 kilometres an hour for roadside workers and emergency vehicles with flashing lights but not for school buses actively loading or unloading children. School buses stop with flashing lights to let children – some of our most vulnerable road users – on and off, yet they are excluded from this protection. This is especially concerning in regional areas, where buses stop on roads which have a

designated speed of 100 kilometres per hour. I urge the minister to explain this discrepancy and consider extending road rule 79A to include school buses in the interests of child safety. They do it in New South Wales. Why aren't we doing it here in Victoria?

Northcote electorate

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (14:47): (1275) My question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport. What evaluation measures will the Department of Transport and Planning use in forming its advice on proposed restrictions for e-bikes and e-scooters on public transport? Consultation has just closed on regulations that would ban them on trains. DTP will now review submissions and prepare its advice. In Northcote many residents worry about the impact of a blanket ban. One 68-year-old told me:

[QUOTES AWAITING VERIFICATION]

My e-bike is my gateway to freedom. If I can't take it on the train, my world will shrink.

Another, in their 70s, wrote:

I bought my e-bike when I retired. It has been invaluable when combined with train access.

Labor is making record investments in public and active transport: Metro Tunnel, new trains and trams, level crossing removals, cycling paths, cheaper regional fares and free travel for young people and seniors. To harness these benefits the system must be seamless and accessible. Safety must come first. Noncompliant and modified devices should not be allowed, but there are fairer proportionate alternatives to a blanket ban, and I urge DTP to consider them carefully.

Richmond electorate

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (14:48): (1276) My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Richmond station is the sixth-busiest train station in Melbourne, a key interchange for locals, for workers and for tourists. It is the gateway to the MCG, but it has not had a proper upgrade in 60 years. The platforms are dangerously narrow. There is no proper weather protection. It is far from meeting legislated disability standards, with steep ramps, no lifts and no hearing technology. And do not get me started on the surrounding areas. They are dangerous to navigate, whether it is by foot, by bike, by tram or by car. Commuters often spill out onto the narrow footpaths that surround it. The residents have had enough. The station is not fit for purpose, and this precinct has been overlooked for far too long. Will the minister finally make Richmond station and the surrounding areas fit for purpose?

Sunbury electorate

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (14:48): (1277) My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations in the other place. Minister, how will constituents in my community specifically benefit from this government's commitment to protecting work-from-home arrangements through legislation? As the minister knows, work from home works for families, providing the flexibility, the option and the choice to make the decision, for those that can, to work from home, which we know particularly works for communities like mine in growth corridors and further away from the CBD. The minister knows well the conversation that has certainly been had amongst the community for some time now, particularly after the pandemic, and I look forward to the minister's response in due course.

Evelyn electorate

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:49): (1278) What is the government doing to fix ambulances ramping at Maroondah Hospital, putting lives at risk? That is my question to the Minister for Ambulance Services on behalf of my community and the dedicated ambulance officers and paramedics at Lilydale ambulance station, who are incredibly frustrated about the massive and persistent problem of ambulances ramping at Maroondah Hospital and other hospitals across Victoria. Ambulance ramping is no fault of our paramedics and ambulance workers. They provide tremendous

emergency health care to people in need and have to wait hours to transfer patients into a hospital bed because of the government's mismanagement of the hospital system. Statistics show ambulance ramping at Maroondah Hospital is particularly bad, with the longest on-stretcher statistics showing over 5 hours at Maroondah Hospital and nearly 3 hours at Box Hill Hospital. After a decade in office the Allan Labor government has failed its promise to fix this, and I take the opportunity to shout out to all of our ambulance workers and paramedics at Lilydale ambulance station.

Broadmeadows electorate

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (14:50): (1279) My question is for the Minister for Environment, and I ask: what work is being done to address illegal tyre-dumping in our community? This is a large and growing problem in many of the suburbs I represent, significantly detracts from local amenity and pollutes our precious parks, waterways and nature strips. It is occurring on council land, on state land, along waterways and roads and on private property, particularly empty houses and lots. As well as being unsightly, large collections of tyres pose fire and safety risks. I recently went for a drive with local resident Danny Toohey, who showed me additional hotspots. I thank him and other community members including Hasan Farah, Lynda Gualano and Jathan Ryan, who have emailed me and raised their concerns with me directly. Everyone has the right to live in a safe and clean environment, and many locals, including me, are fed up with these illegal dumpers. I look forward to the minister's response outlining the work being done by the EPA to address these concerns.

Will Fowles: On a point of order, Speaker, I have some questions on notice for follow-up, please. The questions are 2454, which was due on 19 June; 2488, due 17 July; and 2490, due 17 July.

Bridget Vallence: Speaker, I have a point of order also on quite a number of questions unanswered and now overdue for my constituents. They are questions to the Minister for Finance, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2550, 2551, 2685, 2687, 2688, 2689, 2690, 2691, 2692, 2693, 2694, 2695, 2696, 2697, 2698, 2699, 2700, 2701, 2702, 2703, 2704, 2705, 2706, 2707, 2708; to the Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, 2686; to the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648; to the Treasurer, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2512, 2678, 2679, 2680, 2681, 2682, 2683; to the Minister for Climate Action, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585; to the Minister for Ageing, 2641; to the Minister for Agriculture, 2590, 2709, 2710, 2711, 2712, 2713, 2714; to the Minister for Ambulance Services, 2640; to the Attorney-General, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610; to the Minister for Carers and Volunteers, 2600; to the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, 2616; to the Minister for Children, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2625; to the Minister for Community Sport, 2653; to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, 2633; to the Minister for Corrections, 2613; to the Minister for Creative Industries, at the table, 2650; to the Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts, 2677; to the Minister for Disability, 2597; to the Minister for Education, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624; to the Minister for Emergency Services, 2618; to the Minister for Energy and Resources, 2586; to the Minister for Environment, 2589; to the Minister for Equality, 2603; to the Minister for Government Services, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631; to the Minister for Health, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639; to the Minister for Housing and Building, 2604, 2673; to the Minister for Industrial Relations, 2684; to the Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, at the table, 2649; to the Minister for Local Government, 2632; to the Minister for Mental Health, 2642; to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, 2664; to the Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, 2617; to the Minister for Outdoor Recreation, 2652; to the Minister for Planning, 2672; to the Minister for Police, 2611; to the Minister for Ports and Freight, 2675; to the Premier, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662; to the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, 2601; to the Minister for Public and Active Transport, 2671; to the Minister for Racing, 2612; to the Minister for Regional Development, 2655; to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, 2674; to the Minister for Skills and TAFE, 2656; to the Minister for Small Business and Employment, 2654; to the Minister for the State Electricity Commission, 2687; to the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, 2676; to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, 2651; to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure,

2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670; to the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, 2663; to the Minister for Veterans, 2598; to the Minister for Victims, 2615; to the Minister for Water, 2588; to the Minister for Women, 2602; to the Minister for Youth, 2599; and to the Minister for Youth Justice, 2614. Constituents deserve answers to these questions. These ministers are overdue again and again, and I would appreciate responses for the constituents.

The SPEAKER: The clerks had a bit of trouble keeping up. Could you give them the list, please.

Gabrielle de Vietri: On a point of order, Speaker, I have four unanswered questions on notice – not as many as the previous member. They are from the Minister for Consumer Affairs: questions 935, 936 and 937, all due 18 months ago, and question 1567, due 11 months ago. I would ask you to please follow up with the minister.

Rulings from the Chair

Constituency questions

The SPEAKER (15:00): Yesterday the member for Polwarth asked the minister for an action during his constituency question as well as a question. Members cannot ask for an action as well as a question during constituency questions. The member for Ovens Valley asked for clarification from the minister on a matter, which is an action. The member for Eureka asked the minister for an update on a matter, which is also an action. While it is possible with some effort to interpret what these members intended to ask, I want to make the point that this is a house of debate. Here of all places members should be aware of the meaning of the words they use and be accurate in using them. Members should also be aware of the rules and rulings about how to ask questions in the house. All three members sought actions from ministers, and I rule their constituency questions out of order.

Bills

Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (15:01): It is a pleasure to rise and endorse the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025 as another positive step forward for this international sporting juggernaut, to quote the member for Melton, as well as Victoria's tourism industry more broadly. This year we saw another record turnout for the Australian Grand Prix and an amazing boost to our local economy of approximately \$300 million, reaffirming Melbourne as the sports capital of the world. This bill is designed to keep the good times rolling by safeguarding this event for years to come and ensuring the safety and accessibility of both attendees and locals is an utmost priority.

One of my favourite amendments in this bill is the move to have the corporation adequately fund Parks Victoria for the mammoth effort that they put in to preparing for the event and open the door to further increases as required, because this is the first increase to the payment since the act's commencement 31 years ago in 1994, a time when milk was a dollar a litre, a kilogram of rump steak would set you back only \$12 and a dozen eggs were – wait for it – \$1.90. While we cannot go back to those prices today, we can certainly ensure the incredible work that Parks Victoria does at Albert Park Lake is appropriately compensated, and that is exactly what this amendment sets out to achieve.

The funding is vital, and it reflects the importance of the work they do not just at the grand prix but, may I say, across the state, and in particular in my beautiful district of Monbulk, where some jokingly refer to me as the 'member for parks' because most of the 450-odd square kilometres of my electorate is covered in national or state park. We have the beautiful Dandenong Ranges National Park, full of gorgeous gardens, including the Chelsea Australian Garden in Olinda, located within the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden. We have Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve and Bunyip State Park, to name a few. It is such a beautiful place, and the work that Parks Victoria do there is to be commended.

Nature has a way of creating a lot more work for them than they would like at times. Obviously, several trees have come down over the past few years; they have destroyed bridges. Wear and tear has done that too – the weather is not always helpful. But they are always working to maintain and upgrade them. Just recently we had another bridge open on the Sassafras Creek walking trail, which is wonderful for those who love that particular walk. It is stunning. So thank you, Parks Victoria, for the power of work that is done across the district.

The funding that this bill allows for is due to an increased race period, and it requires more work to get the job done. The tripling of the potential race period can allow so many more activations and so much more engagement and fun for locals and tourists alike, with this bill's permission for non-motorsport events opening so many opportunities.

It might not be your cup of tea, the grand prix, and I have to say it really was not mine until I actually managed to attend it, Acting Speaker Marchant – and it is lovely to see you in the chair. I went, and my prior experience of the grand prix was when I lived in a very, very, very tiny flat in South Yarra. I could hear it from Darling Street, and I thought, 'Gee, that's noisy, and I wouldn't want to get any closer to it than I already am.' Well, I am happy to say that I stand corrected. Attending that event, the rush that is there – it has an incredible energy, and the way it is put on is beyond professional. It is a stunning event.

I know it is not for everyone – I do appreciate that. If you like things at a slower pace, then you can always jump on Puffing Billy and come out to my electorate, where I think it might be – and I really should have checked this beforehand – about 15 kilometres per hour, or maybe less, because you can race it in September. I tell you, it is a great thing when I am there to kick off the start of that race. It is a wonderful moment when I get to announce it, because I will never run it myself, so that is my one little moment, a sliver of reflected glory that I can enjoy, because running is definitely not for me. But Puffing Billy is stunning, and I have to say the work that has been done there and the way it has bounced back post COVID is a credit to those working there. The train of lights sold out three weeks worth of evening tickets in I think it was around about 4 hours. It was incredible. And the waitlist, the number of people who wanted a ticket, was about four or five times the number of people who managed to get one. That is testament to incredible tourism events happening across the hills. Acting Speaker Marchant, if you have a pooch – I am not sure if you do. Do you have a dog? But if you do, those who have a dog and would like to catch the train can put them once a month on the dog carriage. That sells out like hot cakes as well. This is about the Australian Grand Prix, but if you like a slower pace, I am just giving a plug to my fabulous local major tourism international drawcard Puffing Billy. It is a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful event to occur. And do not wait to have kids to go there or think you have to be a child yourself. Just go for the day. It is wonderful, so get out there, everyone, I say.

If you look at the Australian Grand Prix as a major tourism event, we really do these events better than anywhere else in the world, I have to say. Melbourne – what a city to be in or to be near. When those large events occur, the benefits for my electorate are tangible. Extra people come to the mountain. When people come to Melbourne, the Dandenong Ranges is the perfect day trip. I have local businesses who tell me they know when a major event is happening in Melbourne because more people are coming to the area – to Olinda, to Sassafras. They may go all the way out to Gembrook. They may go to Belgrave and catch Puffing Billy. And it is wonderful for our local economy. It really is amazing, the impact that an event in Melbourne has 50-odd kilometres east of the city in my area, so it is absolutely a boon and a benefit for us when Melbourne is humming with major events like the grand prix, and long may that continue, may I say.

I am a very proud local member of the district of Monbulk, if you had not worked that out already, and I have got to say I just had a tour last week by the owners of Burnham Beeches. For those who are not aware, Burnham Beeches is located adjacent to the Alfred Nicholas Memorial Garden. Alfred Nicholas made a fortune by discovering soluble aspirin, and having doing so he built an incredible mansion. This is a piece of Art Deco glory. It had the first working lift in a private residence I think in the Southern Hemisphere – absolutely in Australia but potentially in the Southern Hemisphere. This

incredible mansion has basically gone to rack and ruin for about 30 years. There have been many attempts by a number of people to try and revive it, but I am really pleased to say that our government is actually backing the new owners to do so. It will become luxury accommodation, and it will solve an issue we have in our local tourism, which is a lack of large-scale accommodation up in the Dandenong Ranges. Most accommodation is B & Bs, cottages and Airbnbs, obviously in more recent times. So to see the plans they have for Burnham Beeches – I am telling you, mark 2027 in your calendar, because that is the time you need to go and check it out.

It will have great benefit too for locals because there will be day spas, there will be a providore and they will be growing their own produce, from which they will then make food to serve to others and to sell as well. I cannot believe how amazing it is going to be. I am really, really excited about that. Once again, I am really proud our government has chosen to back them with some assistance in funding to help them get this off the ground, because that will have a tangible effect on my local businesses. We have a lot of cottage industries up there. We have beautiful soap makers and local dressmakers as well. We have people making incredibly high quality foodstuffs and products, and they will reap the benefits of Burnham Beeches, as they do the benefits of people from around the world and interstate coming to see the Formula One Grand Prix.

Tourism is so significant for the district of Monbulk and our local economy; everything we do here in the City of Melbourne to draw more people in absolutely benefits the people in the district of Monbulk.

So I am really happy with the bill that we have before us, because it is just going to see this incredible event – as I stated at the beginning of my contribution, I was a little bit sceptical about it at the beginning, like the member for Melton, but I have been converted. I am pleased to say that over the years I have now become quite the fan. I do not sit there watching the documentary like my sister does – she is a huge Formula One fan – but I have to say I am quite a fan of Piastri, a homegrown international superstar, and I cannot wait for the next grand prix to roll around and rev its engines up. I will be doing my level best to get there for at least a day if possible, because it really is quite the event. It is not just the race itself, it is everything adjacent to it too. When I went, I have to say there was some incredible Italian local produce, which was on point. If you want to make people happy, feed them excellent, high-quality Italian food, which is what you can get if you go to the grand prix. That mozzarella di bufala, which was made in front of me, which I ate while still warm, I will never, ever forget. This is a fabulous bill. I commend it to the house. I am delighted the opposition is not opposing it.

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (15:11): I am feeling a bit hungry now, actually, after that contribution. I have not had lunch yet – the Italian delights. I rise to make a contribution on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. This is a bill for an act to amend the Australian Grand Prix Act 1994 to extend the maximum duration of the race from seven days to up to 21 days, to update the definition of the grand prix insignia, to increase the maximum payment that the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) can make to the committee of management, to allow the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to host events approved by the minister which are not motorsport events or Formula One events, to provide for the appointment of acting members and an acting chairperson to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and to provide for the declaration of public areas within the declared area. The act itself has been in operation for more than three decades, and the Australian Grand Prix has been one of the major highlights on the nation's sporting calendar for Melbourne and for Victoria. We are proud to host this event in our state.

Whilst I have not attended the grand prix, Shepparton does have a very special connection to one of our sporting greats, the hugely successful superstar racing car driver Oscar Piastri. Oscar's grandparents live in Shepparton and remain deeply involved in Oscar's journey, which has been very well published. As we have seen in recent times, Oscar is having enormous success, which has been supported by local, national and international media. As you can imagine, the community have been getting behind Oscar, cheering him on from afar. I expect there will be a strong local presence at the grand prix next year, but definitely there will be fierce support for Oscar and his family locally and

also across the nation. It will be very exciting. We are enormously proud of Oscar's journey and his success on the world stage. It is also very exciting for Oscar and his family to have a grandstand named in his honour at next year's grand prix, the 30th anniversary. Let us hope that he can bring it home in 2026.

Having significant events such as the grand prix is such a strong economic driver, as has been well shared in this chamber, filling motels and cafes and attracting visitors from worldwide. It is incredibly important to showcase opportunities to attract events on a world scale, including national and international opportunities. The grand prix is a critical economic driver for Victoria, and the 2025 race attracted over 465,000 attendees. It contributes over \$300 million annually to the Victorian economy and supports more than 1145 full-time jobs across the hospitality, tourism, retail and related sectors.

Whilst we absolutely support the grand prix, we also need more opportunities in the regions to share economic opportunities. My electorate is known as the regional sporting capital of Australia, and we have had some incredible international and national sporting events. We have achieved some fantastic opportunities by putting our electorate on the world stage and in the spotlight.

Back in 2019, when I was the mayor, we had an international live stream of the international beach volleyball event, which was held on our lake. We do not have a beach. I am talking about international beach volleyball. What we did was truck in tonnes of sand and place it alongside our lake, so we created our own beach.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Kim O'KEEFFE: Hundreds of tonnes. I do not know how many tonnes, member for Frankston, but hundreds of tonnes. I am not sure how many we took, but it was a lot. There were a lot of trucks trucking in sand so we could create our own beach, creating an opportunity to host an international event – that being, as I said, international beach volleyball. This opportunity meant that in between games I had the opportunity to do an international live stream and to put the call out about the wonderful land and many opportunities in my region, and we had a call the following Monday that actually led to a significant investment in the region. You never know what you can attract when you shine a bright light on your region and, as we are talking about today, on our state when it comes to the grand prix. We need to put ourselves out there and to show our capabilities and to create opportunities.

What we are truly lacking in my electorate is investment into our sporting facilities to continue to attract sporting events, which we do depend on in our region, and we must have fit-for-purpose facilities. The member for Mildura also actually raised this important fact that regional communities can create incredible opportunities. But as I have said, we have to have fit-for-purpose facilities, in particular sporting facilities. We look at the lost opportunity from the cancellation of the regional Commonwealth Games, which, exactly like the grand prix, would have created such a huge economic boost and also would have put us on the world stage. The promise of investment, legacy infrastructure – it has been a huge let-down during these challenging times for local businesses, including motels and hospitality. As I said, it was a huge let-down to my community and a lost opportunity.

As many have raised in the chamber today, there are also some concerns regarding some of the increase in costs, and of course we have to be diligent in managing that and not imposing further increasing costs on the state, particularly if we are increasing other events and having those opportunities. As a state we need well-managed and financially sustainable major events to ensure that the economic benefits of events such as the grand prix can continue well into the future. On this side of the house we have advocated for the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to increase profitability and to reduce government contribution. We encourage events to go ahead, but we also need to reduce the burden on the budget. We want to make sure that we see proper oversight with Victorians' taxpayer

money. Largely the reason from the government for extending the event has been for safety reasons, but the government have not indicated what the extents of those reasons are.

The member for Albert Park also raised the concerns around community safety in her contribution and the need for ongoing discussions, something that she said has been raised also by her constituents. There have been some concerns about extending the race period from seven days up to 21 days from some of the local community and more broadly, but also the extended closure. Many are concerned that there was only a two-week consultation period. We acknowledge the feedback from key stakeholders, including the City of Port Phillip, who raised valid concerns about the short consultation timeframe and community engagement. With such a short consultation period, it has created a situation where some community members and sporting clubs and groups may not have had sufficient opportunity or time to organise putting in a submission in time, but it has also created a perception within the community that a decision had already been determined.

The City of Port Phillip also argued that the proposed extension of the race period from seven days up to 21 days presents considerable challenges for local sporting clubs, particularly rowing and sailing clubs, that depend on uninterrupted access to the lake and do not have capacity to rehome to a nearby or close location, but the extended closure of Albert Park Reserve will also significantly restrict access for recreation. The lack of consultation and discussions with the impacted community is very frustrating, and of course we expect a backlash will occur if we do not do that process properly. We do want to see this amazing event continue. But I think it is also important that the voices of communities are heard and understood, and hopefully they can work through some of those challenges – some, obviously, not as easily as others. Importantly, the bill does ensure that public access to Albert Park, used by over 7 million people annually, can be maintained via designated access zones and tenant usage during this extended period. The bill established a mechanism to enable the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to allow access to Albert Park during the race period, ensuring the public continues to have as much access to the park as possible for as long as it is safe to do so.

Another amendment this bill makes is the bill provides for the AGPC to host non-motorsport events at any time, subject to approval by the minister. In doing so, the AGPC must submit an application to host such events six months in advance of the proposed event and contain essential information and security information. Only the minister will have regard to the financial sustainability of event as well as operational factors and any consultation undertaken.

As the City of Port Phillip raised, they are concerned with this amendment, and without clarity on the nature and scale of these events the potential in regard to competition, they said, exists for local venues and events, as well as community impacts on an additional scale.

Clause 25 of the bill seeks to amend section 41(1) of the Australian Grands Prix Act to substitute the maximum amount of the payment that the AGPC may make to the committee of management in respect of each race period, in this case Parks Victoria. This amount would be the greater of \$200,000 or the prescribed amount, which is currently \$100,000. This increased contribution by the AGPC to Parks Victoria does not guarantee that the funds will be used for site remediation. As administered under the act, the Governor in Council can make decisions regarding acting appointments to the AGPC.

Just going back, with the minute I have got to spare, in regard to community consultation, the Victorian government is seeking feedback on the proposed changes, emphasising the importance of community input, and we need to see that happen, as I have alluded to. Finally, I would like to wish Oscar great success at the grand prix, and we cannot wait to have another exciting grand prix in the state of Victoria.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (15:21): It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to make a contribution on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. The Formula One Australian Grand Prix is more than just a sporting contest. It is one of the defining fixtures of Melbourne's identity as

the entertainment capital. Year after year Albert Park becomes a global motorsports hub, and the world's fastest machines and finest drivers converge there, as do many Formula One fans from Melbourne, Australia and indeed right around the world.

I have listened to lots of contributions prior to mine, and whilst it may be true, member for Sandringham, that this event was brought to Melbourne by a former Liberal Premier, it has been made the event that it is today by Labor governments, both Bracks and Brumby and Andrews and Allan. When we are talking about the organisation and governments, it may be true that it was brought here by a former Liberal Premier, but it has been made the event that it is today by Labor governments, and we should acknowledge the current minister, Minister Dimopoulos, and the fantastic work that he and his department have done to make this event into what it is today. For locals in Melbourne and Australian Formula One fans, it is a festival atmosphere when we go down there, and it is a real celebration of not just Australian motorsport and Formula One but of major events in this state and how fantastic we are as the state of Victoria – not just the government but hospitality, tourism and everybody that puts in to make these events what they are.

As I said, Victoria is the major events capital most certainly of Australia – and I will go into some of the major events that we have here and what makes Victoria the major events capital of Australia – but in my view it is the major events capital of the world, particularly for sporting major events, and with that comes an enormous economic benefit. In 2025 this event increased Victoria's gross state product by \$323.9 million, which is gobsmacking. To think that a major event can contribute that to gross state product is mind-boggling, but it is no surprise. I must admit I have not traditionally been a motorsports fan – I have not traditionally been a fan of Formula One – but I, like many after watching *Drive to Survive*, have been converted.

I am now a McLaren fan, as I think many Australians are, with Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris. I think in recent years in particular the growth of this event has been absolutely astronomical, and with that, the benefit that it has for this state in respect to economic revenue has been absolutely enormous. It also generated over 1600 full-time equivalent jobs and generated an estimated \$3.08 in direct economic impact to Victoria for every dollar invested by the Victorian government. That is a good investment by any stretch, by any measure. A 300 per cent return on investment is a good investment by any measure. It also attracted 465,000 people down to Albert Park in March, which is a record attendance for the event. Hotel occupancy in Melbourne was 93 per cent on the Friday, 94 per cent on the Saturday and 90 per cent on the Sunday, and broadcast viewership was approximately 78.5 million people across the weekend. That means that people across Australia and indeed across the world are seeing what Melbourne has to showcase, and then the flow-on benefit for tourism that that has is astronomical as well.

As I said, Victoria is the major events capital of the world. A recent independent study commissioned by Visit Victoria found that our major events calendar contributed \$3.3 billion in value to the Victorian economy, up from \$2.5 billion in 2019. The Australian Grand Prix plays an enormous role in that. Tennis fans would probably disagree and have an argument here, and I do not want to start that argument, but I would say that this is probably the flagship major sporting event on our calendar.

Members interjecting.

Dylan WIGHT: I am getting to it. We have the Australian Open, we have the Australian Grand Prix and we have the Victorian Spring Racing Carnival, which will kick off –

Members interjecting.

Dylan WIGHT: Hang on. I have not finished. The Spring Racing Carnival, which I can tell you I will be attending –

Steve McGhie interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: I will have some tips for you, member for Melton. Watch this space. Actually, my filly just did a piece of work this morning, an improving piece of work, and may feature in a race during spring, so I will give you that one. The Spring Racing Carnival will be kicking off – and we are seeing the really good horses come out in the Memsie this weekend, Mr Brightside and Another Wil – and of course there is the AFL Grand Final, which we will see in five weeks time, which is personally my favourite. All of these major events together provide such an economic benefit to Victorians. But it is not just the economic benefit; it is part of the fabric of the Victorian community to be able to have access to these absolutely amazing events. The Boxing Day test, the Australian Open, the grand prix, the Spring Racing Carnival, the grand final – you name it, Victorians can attend.

But we are not stopping there. Under the Allan Labor government our major events pipeline just keeps getting better and better. We have signed a multiyear deal for Melbourne to host an NFL regular season game.

Members interjecting.

Brad Rowswell: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I believe the member for Tarneit, who is making a worthy contribution, deserves the respect of the chamber and to be heard in silence. I would encourage you to tell members to give the member for Tarneit the respect he is due.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Alison Marchant): It is not a point of order.

Dylan WIGHT: But we are not stopping there. There is a regular season NFL game from 2026; a two-year deal to host the Australian Open golf; the NBA x NBL series, where we will see the New Orleans Pelicans here in October; and the Rugby World Cup of course in 2027. There is the Westwood–Kawakubo exhibition. I do not know what that is, but we have got that coming to NGV here in Melbourne. Victoria and Melbourne are the major events capital of not just Australia but the world. Our calendar of sporting events is unrivalled and unparalleled, and the Australian Grand Prix is nothing different, made into what it is by Labor governments.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (15:31): I am actually going to do something a little different. I am going to stick to the grand prix and the legislation that is before us. Listening to many contributions, I know that is a little bit different today. First of all, I am going to talk a little bit about some of the background and the history around the grand prix and then move to the changes and why some of these changes need to be introduced.

As we have heard from many, the grand prix is a major event in Victoria, and it is an enormous economic contributor. Whether it be at hotels, restaurants or cafes, the place is really buzzing at that time, and we all know that – we can see it. There is a lot of background work in setting up – all of the marquees need seating, lighting and flooring. There are so many jobs associated with the grand prix itself, running the event and the organisation – we have got 1149 full-time equivalent jobs. The contribution to the Victorian economy in 2023 was \$268 million, with a significant direct expenditure as well. Now, I do know, and I think we all know, that the taxpayer has contributed quite extensively to the grand prix and to the success of the grand prix, but we equally know it is one of the biggest gigs in town because it has so much direct and indirect benefit to the Victorian economy, and it is important that it is supported.

I guess former Premier Kennett knew and understood that the sorts of benefits and the opportunities it would bring and unlock for Victoria would be extensive, which is why he managed to steal it from South Australia. A friend of mine who was a grid girl at the Adelaide grand prix and who may or may not have become a minister of the Crown under the Marshall government said that being a grid girl was the biggest gig in town. It opened so many doors and it was a wonderful –

Mathew Hilakari: Stick around long enough and you learn something, don't you?

Cindy McLEISH: Do not demean women.

A member: No-one is demeaning women.

Cindy McLEISH: You were. You absolutely were.

She said it was a wonderful event and really made such a difference to Adelaide, which is why we wanted it and we need to keep it in Victoria. Keeping it in Victoria is really important because there are others out there who are ready to nab it. We know that New South Wales had a bid and were unsuccessful, but equally other places around the world are very keen to host Formula One events. We know the one in the Netherlands is coming up very shortly. The Netherlands' Max Verstappen is the champion, and the Netherlands are hosting their last one. Within Spain, the Barcelona grand prix is moving to Madrid. France – they have had so many champions, and they now do not have a grand prix. So it is so important that everybody in this chamber – and I know that there are a number of members from the Greens who do not support the grand prix – supports the grand prix now and into the future.

We do not want to give them a blank cheque, but we do need to make sure that the conditions are there to make sure that we keep it in Victoria and it is alongside some of the other great major events we have heard about – the Australian Open, the AFL Grand Final, the Spring Racing Carnival and Boxing Day. I may just declare that I have also fairly recently become a McLaren fan after going to one of the pre-grand prix events.

The bill that we have before us is making a number of changes. Most of the changes are around the extension of the race period from seven to 21 days, which is this exclusive access period. It is also about the grand prix corporation being able to host non-motorsport events – I will come back to those in a moment – and there is an increase in payment to Parks Victoria.

I am going to start with the broadening of non-motorsport events. This is to capitalise on the brand, because we know the brand of Formula One has great, great strength – great market power – and the government brokers all get out and really need to minimise their investment into the future and minimise their spend. One of the ideas about capitalising on the brand is allowing the grand prix corporation to be involved in non-motorsport events. This may be something such as a Formula One exhibition, and at the moment these exhibitions are going around the world. It may be that they can come to Melbourne, and the Australian Grand Prix Corporation is the most appropriate body to run those and get involved with that. I think it is not a bad idea at all that there may be some things at Albert Park. But what we did clarify at the bill briefing is they are not just going to get into hosting an athletics event at Albert Park because that is in and around the precinct. It will be related to grand prix Formula One because they have that brand and they can absolutely maximise the leverage. They can leverage off that really, really well.

Extending the race period from seven to 21 days is interesting in itself. Obviously there is prior approval here. It will be published in the *Government Gazette*. What we are finding, or what the grand prix corporation are finding, is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for public safety. We have an area that is already an exclusion zone, but people still go in it. Joggers – I do not know whether they do it deliberately or not. They think, 'Oh, yes, I can still get through here,' and they go into an area that they are not supposed to be going into. That is quite dangerous, and they have had a number of near misses, but equally, extending the race period and that exclusion zone does not mean that this is going to get any easier. It is going to be a longer period that they have to be keeping their eye out on what is going on and where people are breaching the boundaries and getting into areas that they should not. One of the key areas here is that this is being proposed to create a safer and more secure environment for all of those users. We know that for the grand prix and the short number of days that it runs there are set-up periods either side as well. This takes into account that period where there is the erection and pulling down of stands and things like that, for which we might need that safer period at that time.

Most of the sporting clubs and tenants will actually be able to continue to access the facilities there. The additional 14 days will mean for that period they will have tailored arrangements. I hope that does happen, because I know there is a lot of sport down and around the Albert Park precinct. I know that they have a hockey club down there, and I have played at that ground many, many times. I see also some of the disruptions that occur, and we need to minimise that for park users. In most instances the tenants are not going to be impacted by the seven to 21 days – that additional 14 days when that building and dismantling are taking place. As I said, it is a good thing that they are not going to be disrupted terribly.

There is a payment to Parks Victoria that is made already. This payment is made for the relocation of tenants, and you have got to maintain and upkeep the ovals, because we have, during that period of the grand prix, people trampling all over ovals and the parks, and that is certainly detrimental to the playing surfaces.

Already, as I said, there is a payment to Parks Victoria, but they are increasing that payment, probably in goodwill because of those seven to 14 days.

The attendance at the grand prix has increased significantly, from an estimated just under 325,000 fans in 2019 to almost 466,000 in 2025. So we have got a lot of foot traffic in and around that area. I think whether it is on the golf course or whether it is in the parks and ovals that are there, where you see the erection of stands, the marquees, the merchandise everywhere, the toilet blocks, all of those additional things that get set up really do make an impact on the surface. I think that the government may even probably have been able to go a little bit further, but I know that they have spent a lot of money to make sure that the pit lane area and other facilities are going to be upgraded further. The opposition is not opposing this bill. Good luck to the grand prix going forward.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (15:41): I am pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to make a contribution on this bill and to follow on from the comments that have been made on the grand prix (GP) and the significant contribution that it makes to the Victorian economy, the major events calendar and of course setting our state up for opportunities going forward. I think the tone of the debate throughout the course of this afternoon has been a reasonable one, and the acknowledgement of the significant economic contribution – the jobs that are created and the work that goes into making the grand prix the event that it is – is something that is acknowledged across the house and is something that we need to make sure that we continue to update, review and work very closely on with the organisation, which does a very important job in running such a massive event.

Just a couple of comments in terms of the broader contribution of the major events calendar: I know that the member for Tarneit canvassed in great detail the significantly long list of events that we are very proud to host right here in this state, whether it be the grand prix, which we are dealing with this afternoon, the Spring Racing Carnival, highlighted by the Melbourne Cup, the Australian Open, the AFL Grand Final or so many others. What we know of course is that it is not just the event but the contribution from the point of view of tourism, hospitality and the opportunity for people to come to our great state and enjoy a number of different experiences whilst they are here. What we know is that it is not just the event itself but it is all of the food and dining and visiting local attractions that tourists get to enjoy when they come to this great state.

What we need to do, and the purpose of this bill goes to this, is make sure that we are reviewing and updating provisions for the hosting of the event. The expansion from seven to 21 days for all of the matters that have been canvassed really well by members this afternoon in the house go to – and the previous member I think articulated this quite well – the significance of the event. We know that Albert Park is a fairly large place, and if you have had the opportunity, as many others have had, to go and see the grand prix, the set-up of the event is a massive feat in itself. Looking at the way the teams work, it is obviously highly competitive. There is a great deal of planning, thought and indeed money that goes into running an event such as the GP, and the work that is done around that is extraordinary. Of course that enables the opportunity, as other members have mentioned, for both the food and dining

elements of our state to be on display. It is a really proud opportunity for our state to be able to host what is such a significant and important event.

Making sure that we are working with those that put in lots of time, lots of energy and a huge amount of effort to host an event such as this is really important. So in the context of debate this afternoon, and as I mentioned earlier, I think it has been a fairly respectful one and mostly quite accurate. I take this opportunity to thank every single person that plays a role in bringing not just the GP but all of our major events to Victoria. Thank you to each and every one of those people, whether you are someone that is at the gate or on food and beverage, taking an opportunity to play your role. One of the things that I notice at all of our major events and sports right across the state is just how proud people are to be able to play their part. It could be a fairly minor role, it could be some casual work, but the jobs that are generated from the events – not just in the city but right across the state – are I think really important. It goes to economic activity, it goes to new skills and it goes to making sure that we are supporting people to enjoy a phenomenal range of different experiences. I think it is something that we should be really proud of.

So in the context of this bill, I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone in my community that might play a role in such events. To all of those people that get to go and experience them, whether it is the GP or many of the others that I have mentioned earlier, it is something that is really important to our state. What I am really pleased to be able to say is that whether it is through the budget process or a whole range of other measures available to the government, we have been able to support these events going forward.

The previous speakers have rattled off some of the key statistics that go to the events themselves, and I will do the same quite briefly. The 2025 grand prix increased Victoria's gross state product by \$323.9 million, generating – I mentioned employment – 1631 full-time equivalent jobs and an estimated \$3.08 in direct economic impact for every dollar invested. That is better than three to one, which is extraordinary. The record attendance figure, which I am sure the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events is really proud of and can probably rattle off in his sleep, is 465,000 people. Hotel occupancy in Melbourne: Friday night, 93 per cent; Saturday, 94 per cent; and Sunday, 90 per cent. It is the first time we have had the F1 Melbourne Fan Festival being free and family friendly at Melbourne Park, and the importance of that really does sell itself. Not everyone can afford to get there, and I think wherever we can add fringe events and other opportunities that are free for families and are family friendly for little ones is really important because it is an opportunity for people to go and have some fun with their family and their friends and to enjoy and learn and share what is a really great opportunity as part of the major events calendar.

As has been really well canvassed by other members – and I will not, in the couple of minutes that I have got remaining, take the opportunity to go through all of the mechanics of what this will do – the key point is that working closely with event organisers as a government, as a team, through the minister's office and via the department is really important. Sitting down and going through, as per the usual process, things that worked really well and things that need to be improved is something that we remain committed to doing. I mentioned some of those key statistics earlier: the 460,000-plus people, the one-to-three ratio in terms of economic output – member for Frankston, you would be very pleased about that as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer.

Making sure that those contributions and that support is provided is something that I know everybody works really hard on.

In summary, providing for the very best grand prix is what this is all about, making sure that we continue to support the work that is done and having a process of consistent and constant review and providing for what will be a terrific event for many years to come. Making sure that we are focused on that experience is really, really important. The bill provides those measures that go to better event management, set-up and planning, and an opportunity to provide for that is something that the government remains focused on. It is a really exciting calendar. It is in a growing state with growing

jobs and a growing population. All of those things enable you to be better and stronger when it comes to event management and when it comes to getting people to our great state to enjoy every single thing that Victoria has to offer. With those comments, I proudly commend the bill to the house.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (15:51): I rise to make a contribution on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. Events like the grand prix, events like the Australian Open, events like the Spring Racing Carnival and events like the AFL Grand Final transition governments and transition sides of politics who are in government. I think that has been demonstrated by all the speakers who have been so supportive of it. But I think it is important to look at a bit of the history of some of those events. If you think about the Australian Open and the shift of the Australian Open tennis from Kooyong to where it is now at Melbourne Park, that was actually made possible years ago by then Nationals leader Peter Ross-Edwards. The Nationals and the Liberals were not in coalition in the Cain government, and the Nationals actually supported Labor to make that happen. Yes, it is named after John Cain, but I could equally acknowledge Peter Ross-Edwards as the Nationals leader who was brave enough to make sure that it came to Melbourne Park. I can understand why the Liberals probably did not want it to leave Kooyong, because they had the member for Kooyong at that particular time –

Mathew Hilakari: Those were the days!

Peter WALSH: Those were the days. But it transitions sides of politics, because we know these major events put us on the world stage with the TV coverage. As much as it is also about the people that come here and the hospitality and the income that is generated and the hotel bookings that are generated here in Victoria, it is also about promoting Australia on the world stage, and those events do that. The Australian Open does that, the spring carnival does that and the Melbourne Cup does that – fantastic events that everyone here would support. Well, perhaps some of those that sit directly to my left may not be as supportive as we are. I think the only challenge we all have with the Spring Racing Carnival is to get some winners. It is always a much better carnival if you can actually pick a couple of winners, so if the government could introduce legislation where every MP was guaranteed a winner or two, we might actually find that a bit more fun. But again, both sides of politics support the Spring Racing Carnival and the racing industry here in Victoria and the economic activity and the jobs it creates over that time.

A member: What about the Boort cup?

Peter WALSH: The Boort Pacing Cup? I helped sponsor that. That is a great event. The AFL Grand Final – again, both sides of politics. We all have our football teams. We all know who we would like to win the grand final. I can tell all the other teams you are going to miss out this year because Geelong will win it. I do not want to put the kiss of death on them, but I am hopeful Geelong will go very well in the grand final. But again, what was once a sport that was effectively Victorian is now national, and it has international recognition and a lot of TV coverage as well.

When we come to the grand prix, which is what this legislation is about and which is part of that suite of major events here in Victoria that does put us on the world stage, we need a vote of thanks to Jeffrey Kennett, to Ron Walker and to Pat McNamara, who actually made all that happen. I know those on the other side want to own the grand prix now and are very proud of it – and the government of the day does that – but if you think back to the early 1990s, the grand prix was in Adelaide, and Adelaide saw that as the jewel in their event crown. And one Premier, Jeffrey Gibb Kennett, with the support of Ron Walker, actually won the grand prix from Adelaide, for Victoria.

While I mention Pat McNamara, Pat was the police minister at the time. The Labor Party opposed the grand prix going to Albert Park. Let us call a spade a spade. There were demonstrations. The member for Albert Park at the time was John Thwaites, who went on to be Deputy Premier of the state. But there were demonstrations. There were people chaining themselves to trees because there were a number of trees that needed to be taken out to make the track safe. People were chaining themselves to trees. People were demonstrating everywhere. The police had to be called in to allow the workers

to do the work. So yes, it is great that the Labor Party and current Labor government is so supportive of the grand prix. But at that particular time they literally violently opposed it with the demonstrations that happened there, and there was a huge issue for Victoria Police and the workers with what all the demonstrators did chaining themselves to trees and what they did putting obstacles in the way of the machinery. We do owe a vote of thanks to the vision of Jeff Kennett and Ron Walker in actually making sure we brought that here, with the support of his government and the people that helped him do that, because it is a major event, as everyone has said in heated agreement around here.

Some people question how much taxpayer money has to go into it, but I would say that we do need it here. We do not want another capital city of Australia to pinch it off us. We need to be on the world stage with that particular event and have Melbourne promoted all the time.

From the point of view of the actual mechanics of the bill, as previous speakers, including the shadow minister, said, we will not be opposing this legislation. An issue that I would just like to raise and issue a caution on would be, I suppose, that in the bill the declarations and variations of access are now done via the *Government Gazette* and a website only. We are getting to the point now where public knowledge of decisions that are made is getting harder to find. Everyone says something is on a website. Something being on a website does not necessarily mean you can always find it that easily. With Google search you can probably find some of it, but just saying it is on the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action website, the Parks Victoria website or someone else's website does not mean you can just go in there with a couple of clicks and find it. You have actually got to have a detailed knowledge of the path through to where you can get it. I would have thought it would be better if there was a more formal way. And not many people actually read the *Government Gazette* every week; it is not something that is front of mind and sitting on the kitchen bench for people to go and read to see that there has been a change to a declaration or a variation to Albert Park for the grand prix or for an event that is going to be held there, and there is the capacity now for events other than the grand prix to be held there with the minister's consent.

The idea of actually having some signs put up so that people know in two weeks time or whatever the time may be there will be some restrictions put in place I think would be a sensible thing for the government to consider, rather than just saying it is going to be on a website. There are a lot of Melburnians and Victorians as well that use that wider Albert Park precinct for sporting events or social events on the lake – for running, jogging and riding their pushbikes and all the things that they do. I think the government could give some consideration to how there may be some signage put up saying, 'In two weeks time or three weeks time' – or whatever a suitable time is – 'there will actually be some restrictions to your access here. Make some plans accordingly so that you won't turn up here one day thinking you're going to play golf or thinking you're going to go out on the lake and all of a sudden it's shut.' The government could take on notice that there might be a better way of actually giving some notice and some public display of what is going to happen and also how stakeholders are going to be engaged in the future in those decisions, particularly for events that are outside the 21 days of the grand prix. There are quite a few stakeholders that use the whole Albert Park precinct. I suppose that is a key issue that I would see from going through the legislation.

The other one just to touch on is being able to host events other than the grand prix there. We have gone through the notification, but at the moment it effectively says that it is with the consent of the minister. I would hope the minister has some form of consultation process, again, with all the other stakeholders and there is some oversight to that. Albert Park is a magnificent precinct. It needs to be available to the public, but we also need to use it for key events. It would be great if a little bit more money could be made so the taxpayer does not have to subsidise the grand prix quite so much, but again there just needs to be some oversight of that and making sure people know what is going on.

But I suppose we wish this bill a speedy passage, because as I said when I started, the grand prix is one of our major events here in Victoria – along with the Spring Racing Carnival, the Australian Open and the AFL Grand Final – that we need to make sure we keep both for the economic benefit generated here in Victoria but equally importantly for the TV coverage we get worldwide. As you travel

overseas, people know Melbourne for those events, and I think that gives us a major advantage over the other capital cities of Australia. Let us hope that we keep that advantage into the future, because Melbourne is just so much better than Sydney.

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (16:01): I would also like to make a contribution to the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025 speaking in favour of this legislation and the changes that it makes. At this stage of the debate there is not a lot that has been left unsaid, but I would really like to say at the start how proud I am to be living in Victoria, particularly at the moment. There are so many things to do; there are so many festivals, events and celebrations and a really strong and dynamic sports calendar as well. When I look at the grand prix – and I know that the previous speaker and other opposition speakers have constantly reminded us that this was an initiative of the Kennett Liberal government – I see the Victorian program as a whole: it is all about diversity, having lots of different things for everybody and the great economic benefits that come out of these events attracting people from all over not just Victoria or Australia but the globe to come and see what we have got to offer here in Victoria.

I think about things like the MCG; I know lots of residents of the Thomastown electorate come in for the cricket at the MCG; they come in for the AFL – there is the AAMI stadium; there is the tennis centre. Of course all of these big major event places where you can hold great events have really been as a result of the great foresight and future planning and investment of successive Labor governments who have had the vision to look at these investments as long-term benefits to the state. We see how important they are and how much they contribute back to the state, so when we hear all these arguments about spending money and this and that, the whole point is that government should be investing in the state, building the infrastructure, because this increases productivity and also provides benefits in businesses or organisations being able to use the facilities. They do not come to Victoria because they just think this is the right place to be; they come because we have the facilities that they can use and that benefit whatever the event is that they are wanting to hold in Victoria.

In terms of the grand prix legislation that we are looking at and the changes that we are making, there are a couple that people have been speaking for and against; one of the changes is to increase the length of time that the grand prix corporation can use or be a tenant of Albert Park from seven days to 21 days. I know there have been people complaining about the use of public space, but this happens everywhere – we have got the nursery association doing a fantastic exhibition in Queen's Hall this week. The international flower show is actually in the exhibition gardens – again, a public space. But that temporary use of public spaces is exactly what they are there for, not just for a particular group that live in an area to use it as their backyard but for all of us to enjoy through visiting and coming to events and celebrating all the great things that Victoria has to offer. Again, there are also jobs in these things. I know that there are a number of residents that work in hospitality and events management, doing the set-up at the grand prix and also involved in working for those companies in hospitality to provide the food and drink that those that are attending the grand prix enjoy. So there are a lot of benefits. We need to update the legislation around the grand prix to make sure it still continues to be a great success and builds on into the future, and this is exactly what this legislation does.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (16:05): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

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

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (16:06): I move:

That the consideration of government business, notice of motion 2 and order of the day 3, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

*Motions***Budget papers 2025–26****Debate resumed on motion of Steve Dimopoulos:**

That this house takes note of the 2025–26 budget papers.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (16:06): I am absolutely delighted to be rising to speak on the Victorian Labor budget for 2025–26. In doing so, I would like to firstly acknowledge of course Treasurer Symes, the first female treasurer in Victoria's history, on her most recent – not so recent now – budget going back to May, the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Finance and of course all the cabinet ministers, ministerial officers, departments and teams for putting together and assembling this year's budget.

The 2025–26 budget puts forward our positive, prudent and meaningful economic plan for Victoria for the year ahead while ensuring we can continue to take real action to support all Victorians, including people across Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West, when it comes to the cost of living, jobs and skills opportunities, education, transport, health and wellbeing, community sport, environment and sustainability, action on social justice and fairness outcomes for all.

Underpinning this approach is ensuring we continue to strengthen Victoria's economic growth and overall financial position of course. In this respect I am very pleased to highlight that the 2025–26 budget will continue to support Labor's approach since 2014 to build a stronger economy for everyone. Victoria continues to lead all other states in terms of real economic growth, which has remained the case over the last decade. We have added \$138 billion in value and worth to the Victorian economy in our time in office, and the gross state product has increased by 1.5 per cent during the 2023–24 year. The economy is now 11.5 per cent larger than prior to the pandemic, and our economy has grown by over 9 per cent in the last two years alone, according to Deloitte.

We have continued of course that record jobs growth of 900,000 jobs created since 2014. We have continued to keep unemployment rates low – much lower than the nearly 7 per cent the Liberal opposition left behind when they lost office in 2014. We have supported businesses and industries to grow, with more than 113,000 new businesses having been created and opened across Victoria in the last five years, and 18 per cent growth in new businesses, higher than any other state in percentage terms. Business investment has grown by 30 per cent since 2020–21, higher than the largest percentage growth of any other state, reaching record high shares of overall economic activity, and business investment has grown by 3.7 per cent over the year to December 2024, compared to negative 0.1 per cent nationally.

It is also a budget of course that will return Victoria to surplus, forecast to generate a \$600 million operating surplus by the end of the financial year; it is a budget that reduces net debt to gross state product, GSP, over the forward estimates; and it is a budget that will continue to invest in frontline services, cost-of-living relief and support for all Victorians.

It is a budget approach that is continuing to attract more investment and more people to want to come and live, learn, work, raise a family, do business and retire in Victoria. Victoria's population is growing at the fastest rate in the nation. More people want to live here – 130,000 more people have moved here

in the last 12 months, a 2 per cent growth in population across the state, compared to 1.3 per cent or 102,000 people in New South Wales – and Geelong is the top location for people to want to relocate anywhere in Australia – more than the Gold Coast.

When it comes to approval and construction of new homes Victoria also continues to lead the way, with 61,260 home completions as of 25 January, an 8.8 per cent year-on-year increase. That is compared to New South Wales, which delivered 45,600 new homes – a 4.4 per cent decline – and Queensland, which delivered 44,200 homes, 28,500 homes less than Victoria. Victoria also leads the nation on home approvals, approving 10,600 more homes than New South Wales and 17,000 more homes than Queensland.

Record numbers of tourists have continued to visit Victoria – international, interstate and intrastate. As we have touched on earlier in the debate today, 2 million people attended our major events across Victoria over the last year. Seven hundred thousand people attended the football. There were 465,000 people for the Australian Grand Prix record crowd earlier this year and 200,000 at the Avalon airshow. There were record crowds at *Kusama* at the National Gallery of Victoria and the food and wine festival, and coming up we have the NBL, the NFL and so much more.

Across many of our economic, financial and socio-economic metrics and despite international economic inflationary challenges, global geopolitical tensions and trade uncertainty the reality is Victoria's economy is continuing to grow in a positive, stable and resilient manner. As a Labor government and Labor movement, we also know that a budget is much more than just a balance sheet; it is about helping people. That is why, along with solidifying Victoria on a prudent and stable economic and financial path, this year's budget also takes that important action to support young people, families, workers, seniors and everyone in between. In this respect I very much welcome and support the range of cost-of-living measures in the budget, which include free public transport for kids under 18 years of age, every day saving families around \$755 per year from 26 January; free public transport for senior cardholders on weekends, saving seniors more than \$360 a year; making the pharmacy pilot bigger and permanent to treat more conditions via free consultations without the need to see a doctor for a script; the extra \$200 Get Active Kids vouchers for families who need them most with the cost of community, sport and participation; uplifting the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund to \$400 for all eligible primary and secondary school students in government and non-government schools; funding to all children under 16 years to keep enjoying free admission to the Melbourne Zoo, Werribee Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary and Kyabram Fauna Park; continuing our free kinder initiative for all three- and four-year-olds, saving families \$2600 per year per child; and our ongoing support for our landmark free Smile Squad dental in schools program, which is saving families around \$400 to \$500 depending on the check-up and the treatment follow-up needed by children in schools. For ongoing support, the budget provides for our free glasses and vision screening program in schools, again saving families anywhere between \$200 and \$500 on the cost of vision screening and glasses.

We are bringing back the power saving bonus via the new \$100 PSB for all eligible seniors and concession card holders as well. We are extending off-the-plan stamp duty concession for a further year to help those first home buyers, young people, families, workers, downsizers and retirees to find the home that they deserve. Of course we are providing a lot of different investments to support families through mortgage stress; those in need of food relief; for renters, with the minister at the table, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, here as well; and many other disadvantaged community cohorts. This is a budget that is on the side of Victorian people.

Along with the cost-of-living relief, the budget also very much continues our efforts to grow and drive jobs and skills outcomes for all Victorians – as I said, almost 900,000 jobs created since 2014, those continued lower levels of unemployment across the state and ongoing job-generating investments, including through the Big Build infrastructure, transport, kinder, school upgrades and hospital, housing and other service investments. More investment into frontline services – we are talking about doctors, nurses, health workers, kinder educators, school teachers, TAFE teachers, police officers, paramedics, firefighters, health and wellbeing, mental health and community and other services. Ongoing support

to deliver free TAFE – over 80 free TAFE courses are now available to Victorians. Of course we are facilitating the implementation of our *Economic Growth Statement* to fully support industry, business and small business, including through the priority sector areas of advanced manufacturing and defence, health technologies and medical research, circular economy, digital technology and agribusiness, halving the number of regulators by 2030 and giving those practical supports and assistance to our small business community. I want to commend as well the Minister for Small Business, Minister Suleyman, for her work in this space, particularly around the payroll tax threshold reforms that are part of this budget from 1 July, with the threshold rising from \$900,000 to \$1 million, which will help a lot more small businesses not pay or pay reduced amounts of payroll tax across the state.

It is also very much a budget that is about revitalising central Coburg. One of the keynote projects we funded is the \$6 million investment to deliver a brand new Bachar Houli Foundation academy of sport in central Coburg, to be built at the Coburg oval precinct on the site of the former Moreland bowls club on Harding Street. The new Bachar Houli Foundation, the Islamic College of Sport and Aspire college of sport will provide for a new main school campus for the academy; 12 new flexible-use classrooms and learning spaces; two new indoor sports courts and brand new change rooms; dedicated access to sporting facilities such as a high-performance gym and amenities; breakout areas for students and staff; administrative facilities and accompanying toilet facilities; unique and focused programs for students seeking a combination of high-performance sport environments; and a choice of education offerings – an inclusive and active place where both Muslim and non-Muslim Victorians can connect through sport.

Outside of school hours the facility will of course be utilised and accessed by the local community and sporting clubs, with a focus on enabling women and girls' participation in sport by providing a culturally safe and welcoming space.

The Bachar Houli Foundation has a long, long history of building connections through mentorship and sport in the Victorian community. The school supports 76 students in years 11 and 12 through their VCE studies, with this important investment to expand to years 7 and 10 in the coming years in the heart of central Coburg, providing job skills and education pathways in the heart of the north for decades to come. I want to acknowledge the Premier, the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Bachar Houli, Ali Fahour and everyone who has worked so hard to bring this project together, including my federal colleague Peter Khalil, the federal member for Wills, who has helped secure \$15 million from the Albanese Labor government towards realising this project as well. It will be a driving force for Coburg revitalisation in the heart of our community.

Along with this outcome, the budget also supports our government's continued efforts, as I said, to facilitate new industry, business and small business jobs and skills outcomes. I would like to draw the house's attention to the state's 10-year plan to unlock underutilised industrial land to give business and community more certainty. In this respect, I am really excited about the opportunities associated with the former Kangan Batman TAFE site situated in Coburg North, in my electorate, which continues to provide new and future opportunities for economic development, jobs, skills, social enterprise, community and commercial pathways for locals to benefit from. I look forward to continuing that advocacy on that site through that statement, because along with jobs and skills pathways, the budget also recognises the fundamental role that a quality education plays in building and leading a prosperous livelihood.

We have supported teachers and schools to lift year 12 completion rates dramatically from 92 per cent in 2021 to 97 per cent today. That is why I am also delighted of course that we are continuing on with our free kinder initiative and continuing the pipeline of local kinder upgrades, with an \$11.8 million investment towards upgrading 11 local kinders across Merri-bek, creating 385 extra places over the coming years. I am very happy to have previously visited the Derby Street Children's Centre with the Minister for Children Minister Blandthorn to celebrate its completed upgrade and to meet with Louise Wood, the centre manager – a \$3.1 million redevelopment that we have chipped in \$1.2 million for.

We have rebuilt the four-year-old kinder room and added 27 new, approved children's places for the centre to now accommodate 110 places.

It was also great to visit the Merri-bek Toy Library with the minister too around that time and to catch up with Anna Figueiredo, the president of the Merri-bek Toy Library. We provided a \$6000 grant to support the toy library to continue its good work. Over 500 families access the toy library across Pascoe Vale and Brunswick West, so that is a great initiative to support. I really look forward to also working with the minister on progressing early childhood and wellbeing opportunities on the old Coburg Special Developmental School site on the corner of Gaffney Street and Bishop Street, which I continue to advocate for and champion as well.

It was also a pleasure to have secured \$436,000 for VICSEG New Futures, again in the heart of central Coburg – jobs in central Coburg – for them to continue their pioneering multilingual children's program based in Coburg. VICSEG's early childhood multilingual program now reaches across the north-west, supporting 22 playgroups and over 300 migrant, asylum seeker and refugee families. Commendations to the entire VICSEG team: Maree, Raftis, Caspar, Zika and all the others for their efforts in championing their work.

I was also very proud to have secured funding for the magnificent Coburg Primary School community in this budget. Coburg Primary will share in \$10 million of statewide funding that will go towards essential planning for much-needed future upgrades and refurbishment to improve the learning spaces for teachers, students and the wider school community. It is one of the oldest schools in this state's history, so it is well overdue for an upgrade and a facelift, to say the least. And again, commendations to the entire school community, who do a great job advocating for it: Jacob Kantor, the school council president; Mike Cormack, school council; Emma Burrows, school council; Charlotte Bouette, who was the acting principal; Matt Kerby, the principal; Lucy Williams, the assistant principal; and so many others. That of course builds on the work we have been doing with Coburg Primary to deliver them previously new portables on the junior campus and funding to upgrade and repair their accessibility ramps and for other maintenance and refurbishment work and road safety priorities along Bell Street, Elm Grove and Urquhart Street as well.

It was a pleasure to have helped support Westbreen Primary as well with a brand new double-storey portable that we delivered earlier in the year and Coburg North Primary with \$500,000 towards upgrading their toilets. Commendations to Michelle Tedeschi, the acting principal, and the entire school community there.

We opened the \$18 million upgraded Pascoe Vale Primary School as well recently. Commendations to school council president Deb Cowley and Anne McNaughton, the principal. Yvette Jones, the parents and friends association president and communications coordinator is so enthusiastic in championing the school, so it is great to open their new facilities.

We recently visited, Acting Speaker Lambert, Newlands Primary with the Premier to celebrate their \$20 million upgrades that we have delivered. It was so fantastic to work with them. But of course there is more to do, with Merri-bek Primary School of course, which I continue to champion, and many, many others. We are continuing to deliver through this budget the aspirations of the *Merri-bek North Education Plan* and further improvements and opportunities for Coburg High, Strathmore Secondary, Pascoe Vale Girls College, Glenroy College and John Fawcner College so all students have the chance to aspire and succeed. We have invested significantly to improve school accessibility outcomes as well. And of course free TAFE will be continuing.

Transport – of course the free transport for young people and seniors is a huge, huge win through this budget as well. Ongoing improvements to the Upfield and Craigieburn lines through improved off-peak services are reducing them from 40 minutes to 20 minutes. It is a huge, huge uplift in services, along with the other improvements we are making along the corridor as well. The Brunswick tram depot has a \$150 million upgrade to improve local tram services as well. Active transport and road

safety upgrades of course are provided for through this budget. In terms of health, wellbeing, community sport, environmental action, climate action, social justice and the cost of living, this budget has a lot more in it I could talk about, but I commend it for now.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (16:21): I also rise to take note of this year's 2025–26 budget. Budgets are lots of paper, lots of words, lots of numbers, lots of spreadsheets, lots of dot points and lots of charts, but in essence what budgets are are an opportunity to demonstrate the priorities of a government. This is not a partisan comment; this is a general comment. They are the opportunity for governments, whether they be national or subnational governments of any colour, to demonstrate what their priorities are. This year's budget, Labor's 11th budget, is titled 'Focused on what matters most'. I can tell you at the outset that Labor, after 11 years, is focused on anything other than what matters most to Victorians.

I want to take you on a bit of a history lesson. Net debt at the end of this budget cycle is expected to hit, according to Labor's own budget, \$194 billion – \$194 billion.

Michaela Settle interjected.

Brad ROWSWELL: Don't worry; I'll get to what it started with. If you include in the net debt the general government sector, the debt is \$234 billion. Now, we know that the annual interest payment is paid on the net debt only. At the end of the forward estimates over the next four years, as outlined in Labor's 11th budget, the daily interest payment will be \$29 million a day. That is around \$1.2 million an hour just in interest payments – not capital payments, interest payments. The tax take has increased from \$39 billion to \$47 billion. Public sector wages have increased from \$38 billion to \$42.5 billion. Debt has grown by around 9 per cent each and every year since Labor has been in power. Just for a moment imagine if the way the Labor government ran their budget was applied to the way a family or a small business, or a large business for that matter, ran their budget – with an annual growth in debt of 9 per cent per year. Your tax take is increasing from \$39 billion to \$47 billion, but at the same time your debt increases to \$194 billion. Every time this government have been warned to rein in their debt, they have done anything other than rein in their debt, and we know how they pay for it. Victorians know how they pay for it.

Victorian hardworking taxpayers know how they pay for it. What this government have done over the last 11 years has made their poor economic management the problem of everyday hardworking Victorians. That is what they have done with more than 60 new or increased taxes in that time. What do Victorians get to see for this?

We are now at a stage where Victorians are paying more tax than they have ever paid before, where in Victoria we have the highest taxes of any subnational government in the country. We have the highest business taxes of any subnational jurisdiction in the country. We have the highest property taxes of any subnational jurisdiction in the country, and what do Victorians get for it? Sweet nothing. They get more taxes. They are paying more in taxes, Labor's taxes, than they have ever paid before, and they are getting nothing for it. They are being ripped off by a government who, frankly, after 11 years, has failed to care.

Labor continues to fail Victorians. Labor continues to fail everyday hardworking Victorians. And do not ask me, ask the Australian Bureau of Statistics. At a time when our national unemployment rate has decreased to 4.2 per cent, Victoria's state unemployment rate has increased by 0.1 per cent to 4.6 per cent. That means that for 17 consecutive months, Victoria has had the highest unemployment of any state in the country. That 17-month streak – those opposite may wish to cheer and applaud, but I do not – is the longest streak since the Australian Bureau of Statistics began collecting labour force data in 1978. That is nothing to be proud of, because we know that if someone is unemployed, that means that they do not have the ability to pay their way, to provide for themselves, to provide for their families, to positively contribute to their community, to stand on their own two feet, to feel dignity or

to feel worth. A job is not just that, a job is an opportunity for someone to feel self-worth and to contribute, and we on this side want more Victorians to be in jobs.

We have an appetite to drive economic growth, to target industries, to improve productivity and to adopt new and emerging technologies. The private sector is doing it. Why cannot the public sector? The private sector is adopting things like artificial intelligence. Why can't the public sector – to achieve those productivity improvements that we so, so desperately need?

I am not here just to give you the bad news; I am here to give you the good news also, and the good news is this: on the election of a Liberal–Nationals government after the state election in November next year, we will scrap taxes. We will scrap Labor's schools tax. Labor's schools tax is a tax on choice. It is a tax on education. It is a tax on parents' abilities to choose the best educational opportunities for their child. Labor will have you believe that those independent schools and those families that choose to send their kids to independent schools are rich – far from it. At those independent schools, those families who choose to send their children to independent schools – to give them, in their view, what is the very best start in life – many of them do not just work one shift in the taxi but a second shift in the taxi to pay those school fees.

Why are they being targeted?

We will scrap Labor's health tax. We will scrap Labor's health tax not just for GPs but for allied health, because we know and we understand on this side, more so than on the government side, the importance of primary health. The economic circumstance that those opposite simply cannot understand is this: primary health needs to be invested in. Primary health needs to be not just invested in but protected, because as soon as someone presents to an emergency department of a public hospital in this state it costs the Victorian taxpayer far more than investing in, defending and protecting primary health. We get that. Under a Liberal–National government Labor's health tax will be scrapped.

The holiday and tourism tax will also be scrapped – their 7.5 per cent tax on short-term rentals. In another role at another time I had the great privilege of working with my upper house colleagues in the other place to propose to the upper house chamber at that point in time some amendments to Labor's tax on short-term rentals, because not everyone is equal and we should respect diversity in our state and we should do our very best to protect the most vulnerable. We moved amendments in the other place to exclude disabled Victorians, veterans and those parents fleeing domestic violence circumstances from being taxed by Labor's holiday and tourism tax, because Victorians in those circumstances do not want to stay in a hotel. They want to stay in a short-term rental, because short-term rentals, apart from being about a third of the cost of a hotel, also provide the home comforts that vulnerable people need in that circumstance. They provide a microwave, a fridge, a washing machine, a dryer, all those things that people in those vulnerable circumstances need. Together with the crossbench, this Labor government opposed those amendments. So those Victorians who are fleeing domestic violence, those veterans who are experiencing an acute mental health episode and those disabled Victorians who choose a short-term rental over hotel accommodation because hotels do not necessarily provide the set-up for their needs will also be charged Labor's holiday and tourism tax – a 7.5 per cent tax on their stay. It is disgraceful. They say they care about vulnerable Victorians, and they simply do not. That is the good news: under a Liberal–National government we will scrap Labor's school tax, we will scrap Labor's health tax and we will scrap Labor's holiday and tourism tax.

We will also scrap Labor's emergency services tax. Those rates are being received by Victorian home owners and Victorian businesses at the minute, and Victorians are receiving those bills and being absolutely shocked. In my own constituency I have received an example from Mark Sutherland, who is the owner of Sandy Scoops in Bay Road, Sandringham, where he is paying more in Labor's emergency services tax than he is in his Bayside council rates. Year on year the emergency services tax, a state government based tax, has increased by more than 30 per cent. How is that justified? It is really simple how this is justified, because they continue to spend, they continue to waste and they continue to treat Victorians with disrespect. They continue to treat hardworking Victorian taxpayers

with disdain and disrespect, and they just tax them more, they tax them more and they tax them more. This is what is in the DNA of this Labor government, and it is an absolute disgrace.

We will legislate a charter of budget honesty. We will make available a public expenditure dashboard. We will release every five years an intergenerational report. We will establish a Victorian productivity commission. We will reinstate a Victorian code of practice for the building and construction industry and establish construction enforcement Victoria, and we will legislate a debt cap. These are important accountability measures that we are prepared to put on ourselves, because on this side of the chamber we respect Victorian taxpayers money more than they ever will.

In the time that I have left, which is not that long, I simply want to address this: when it comes to Labor's Suburban Rail Loop, it is very, very, very clear they do not care about livability. It starts in my patch; it starts in my community. They do not care about livability in my community. All they want to do is ram through these plans without consultation and without care or concern for my community.

Nick Staikos interjected.

Brad ROWSWELL: Well, they elected me, minister at the table, so they have not voted for the Suburban Rail Loop. With a 5.1 per cent increase in margin at the last state election, they absolutely did not vote for the Suburban Rail Loop, I can tell you that. With the Suburban Rail Loop, in this year's budget there is an item, there is a cost, and in the second, the third and the fourth year, do you know what they say – 'TBC.' Does that mean 'to be confirmed'? Does that mean 'too bloody costly'? What does that actually mean?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): Order! Member for Sandringham, I do remind you: parliamentary language, please.

Brad ROWSWELL: On this side of the house our message on the Suburban Rail Loop is really clear: we will pause it, and we will review it.

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (16:37): I rise to speak in support of the 2025–26 Labor state budget, a budget that meets Victorians where they are and offers support where it is needed. In my community and indeed across the state, families are juggling the cost of living, caring for loved ones and worrying about the future. They do not ask for much. They are the things they all expect: a safe place to live, a school that gives their child the best start, a hospital that is there when they need it and a government that is on their side. This Labor state budget is focused on exactly that: the things that matter. It is a budget that backs Victorians, whether they are in our regional areas or at home in Northcote, by helping people with cost-of-living relief, strengthening the services we rely on and investing in a fairer, stronger future.

I am proud to be part of a Labor government that listens to what matters most and acts with purpose, and I am proud to represent a community that knows we are at our best when we back each other and bring everyone with us. Everywhere I go in Northcote, whether it is the school gate, Northcote Plaza or High Street on a Saturday morning, I hear the same thing: people are doing their best, but it is hard. That is why this budget delivers targeted cost-of-living relief – relief that people will really feel. When we tip into 2026, public transport will be completely free for every Victorian under 18. That means students in Northcote, from Fairfield to Preston, can travel to school, sport, dance class or their after-school job without it costing a cent. It means more freedom for young people and more breathing room for parents, with a saving of over \$700 a year per child. For a community like ours in the inner north that relies heavily on public transport, with two train lines, two tram lines and multiple bus routes, this is a big deal. We are also extending free weekend travel to all seniors card holders, helping grandparents stay connected to the people and places they love.

I have heard from so many people in our community who are struggling with the cost of groceries, rent and power bills, so I am delighted that we are continuing the \$100 power saving bonus for

concession card holders. The initiative has only just opened this week, and already my office has been assisting locals in my community to put their applications in and benefit from this bill relief. Residents are also being encouraged to check their energy deal on the Victorian Energy Compare website, another initiative of the Labor government. If they switch to a cheaper offer, they can save on average \$240 a year, but in many cases it is much more than that. Our budget also expands our solar homes rebates so more Victorians can switch to energy-efficient hot-water and heating systems to make their homes more comfortable and affordable to run.

Recently I had the opportunity to meet again with Darebin Climate Action Now, along with you, Acting Speaker, the member for Preston. DCAN continues to play such an important role in our community, and it was a good, robust policy discussion.

They welcomed the government's strong record on electrification and highlighted further opportunities to support households and renters in moving away from gas, particularly in areas like cooktops and space heating. They also raised the importance of community education and accessible resources so people have the confidence to make the switch. Importantly, DCAN put forward a practical idea, shifting the daily gas connection charge from renters to landlords. They pose that this would create a real incentive for rental providers to disconnect from gas, while ensuring renters, who often have the least power to make those changes, are not left unfairly carrying the burden. I want to acknowledge DCAN's thoughtful advocacy. These are the kinds of conversations that strengthen our collective resolve to not only cut bills and reduce emissions but ensure the transition is fair and leaves no household behind. That principle is at the very heart of the Allan Labor government's reform agenda.

Adding to our cost-of-living initiatives we are also doubling our community food relief program, because for some a food parcel or a hot meal can be the difference between going hungry and getting through. Here in Northcote we have groups like Bridge Darebin, DIVRS and the Alphington Community Centre doing incredible work feeding families; meeting people with dignity, not judgement; and being the safety net our community depends on. Having been to quite a few of these community lunches, I can tell you that these initiatives mean so much to people. Just the ability to come along, sit down with others, share a meal, have a chat and feel welcome is immense.

We all know what it means to rely on our health system. When someone you love is sick, when you are sitting beside a hospital bed or waiting anxiously by a phone, nothing matters more. That is why this budget delivers record investment in health. Almost a third of the entire budget is dedicated to health and wellbeing. We are boosting emergency care, increasing the number of mental health beds, improving ambulance response times and making it easier to get treatment locally without the stress of long waitlists or costly appointments. That includes expanding our virtual emergency department and urgent care clinics, initiatives that are already taking pressure off our emergency departments and making a real difference. The virtual ED – what an incredible initiative. We are tripling its capacity in this budget so more Victorians get that free, 24-hour care from home. It has already helped over half a million people, including many in my community in the inner north, but also very importantly many people in regional areas. In this year's budget we are expanding it to reach almost 1800 people every single day. That is less pressure on our hospitals and more care in our community.

Now with the expanded and permanent role for community pharmacists, Victorians can access free care for more everyday health needs too, including oral contraception, UTIs, allergies, asthma, diabetes and high blood pressure, without seeing a GP or paying extra. That is smart reform. It supports our workforce to work at the top of their scope and gives Victorians faster, more convenient access to care no matter where they live. As the daughter of a pharmacist, I have seen firsthand the role that pharmacists play in our healthcare system, from trusted advice to life-saving care. It is special to see our Labor government backing their role in this way.

For families with little ones in Northcote, we are doing something truly transformative. With a \$5 million boost in this budget, we are delivering a brand new early parenting centre right at the end

of Green Street in Northcote. This will be a haven for local families – a place where new parents can access day programs and overnight stays and get support with sleep, settling, feeding and bonding. Those early weeks and years are tough, and help should just be around the corner. With this centre, it will be.

Education changes lives. It did for my parents, it did for me and it must for every child in Northcote and in our state. That is why I am proud that Labor has delivered free kinder for every three- and four-year-old – making enormous investments in our local schools. We are continuing free TAFE to make sure Victorians have the skills they need for the jobs they want. Nothing brings me more joy than visiting one of our early learning centres in the inner north, where dedicated workers are giving children the absolute best start. We have been really proud to invest in those centres with important upgrades to expand their capacity and make their facilities more inclusive.

As with any Labor government budget, this one provides real support for school-aged kids. We are boosting the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund to \$400 per eligible student, because no student should miss out on the chance to go on a camp. We are investing in literacy and numeracy with year 1 numeracy checks and free advanced maths camps. We are supporting pathways for high-school students with dedicated careers coordinators in government schools to help kids discover the future that they want and deserve. To make sure that every child gets the support they need to thrive in the classroom and beyond, we are completing the rollout of the disability inclusion reforms.

Sport is a part of who we are in the inner north. That is why we are delighted to hear about the \$15 million Get Active Kids vouchers to cover kids' uniforms, gear and club fees. But very excitingly, I am delighted to inform the house that the Allan Labor government has committed \$100,000 for new coaching boxes and team shelters at Pitcher Park in Alphington. It was really special to join Parkside junior footy club to share the news with them a few months back. The club embodies what a thriving community looks like: proud kids, volunteers on the barbecue and families coming together, all cheering each other on. It is those connections that matter. It is why this investment in coaches boxes is not just about fixing some pretty shoddy, run-down local infrastructure, it is about showing the value that we place on community clubs and the role that they have in our society. I wish Parkside all the best with this project, and it will be wonderful to see it come to life.

In a similar vein, we are backing our multicultural seniors groups too, with public liability insurance covered and more upgrades for community facilities. We are also giving \$50 million to boost public aged care, with more beds and nursing resources, and another \$25 million to help seniors live independently at home. That is very important. We are improving roads, transport and pedestrian safety, with almost \$1 billion in roads maintenance, new bike lanes, station accessibility upgrades and safer crossings. And with the Metro Tunnel opening later this year, unlocking faster, more reliable journeys, our city will be better connected than ever. We are also continuing to invest in community safety, with record numbers of frontline police and emergency services personnel along with increased support – nearly \$800 million – for family violence prevention, crisis care and recovery, because everyone deserves to feel safe.

The values in this budget are the values of Northcote: fairness, community and showing up for each other when times are tough. That is why this budget delivers more support for housing, renters and people experiencing financial stress. We are building more social and affordable housing by unlocking government land and fast-tracking public housing renewal. We are investing in services like Mortgage Stress Victoria and the Good Money program, and we are extending off-the-plan stamp duty concessions for a further 12 months, making it easier for first home buyers to get into the market. As Parliamentary Secretary for Renters I am really proud of the work that we are doing to strengthen rental rights and fast-track tenancy disputes through the new Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria service that we launched this year – because a stable home is not just about bricks and mortar, it is about stability and dignity.

The budget puts people first, and it does so responsibly. We have returned the budget to surplus. We are delivering savings and efficiencies across government, and we are continuing to invest in what matters while keeping debt in check and backing economic growth. We are backing small businesses and new industries with the new Victorian Investment Fund and support to take Victorian products to the world, and we are creating jobs in construction, transport, health care and clean energy, building the workforce we need for the future.

The people of Northcote across Alphington, Fairfield, Thornbury, Northcote, Westgarth and Preston expect their government to show up and deliver, and that is what this budget does for our community. It delivers free public transport for kids and seniors; more help with power bills and energy upgrades; support for food relief and household essentials; better schools and disability inclusion; stronger health care, including women's health, which is really important; support for renters; and new housing supply. These are not just abstract ideas. These are policies that you can feel at the kitchen table, at the tram stop, in the schoolyard and in your home. They are practical, they are progressive and they are fair. This is what Labor stands for. We believe in a fair go. We back working families. We strengthen public services. We invest in our communities. And we believe that every Victorian, no matter where they live or what they earn, deserves the support to thrive.

I am proud to be part of a government that does not walk away from challenges. There are those on the other side that want to create division and have that be their mantra, but we are not about that.

We are about creating unity in our state and supporting people that are doing it tough and not marginalising and stigmatising people in our community and not pandering to extremist elements in our society and not platforming them in our Parliament. I am really proud of this Labor budget and what it means for Victorians right across the state but of course in my community in Northcote, where I know that life can get hard and there are challenges before us. There are challenges before us as a community in Victoria, but we are up for the challenge. We are up for that fight. We are up for backing Victorians in and making life better and doing the hard work to get us there. We are not about slogans. We are not about just politicising every single issue. We are about supporting people. We face our challenges with compassion, with courage, with care and with commitment to making life better for the people that we represent.

For that reason I commend the Victorian state budget 2025–26 to this house. We are already seeing the benefits of it in the Northcote electorate and across the state. May we have many more budgets of the Victorian Labor government in this state, because that is what we are about. We are about supporting Victorians, making sure we have the services and infrastructure that we need for the future, making sure we are planning for our future in our state and the population growth that is going to happen in our state, and we are doing it, I think, very well in this budget. I commend the budget to this house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (16:52): This budget was Labor's chance to actually back the regions and actually stand by the words that they say and that they read from their talking points on the other side about caring for Victorians. Instead what it delivers is more taxes than any other state, and it is literally pushing Victorians into other states. Those of us that live outside of the metro areas and in border communities can actually physically see that. Those on the other side might laugh, but we can literally physically see it. I say this all the time, and I know I do, but honestly, living in a border community and watching people develop, build houses at a rate of knots and make housing subdivisions on the other side and meanwhile still come to school on our side of the river and use our hospitals – yet they are able to build and grow their families and businesses on the other side – is really sad.

As I said, this was Labor's chance to actually look like they cared about the regions. They are the communities that grow your food and your fibre and generate power in the member for Morwell's electorate and soon about 80 per cent of the rest of regional Victoria as they continue to bulldoze through the regions haphazardly with their transmission line projects. Instead this budget is written for

Melbourne by Melbourne while treating regional Victoria as an afterthought, because we know that Labor cannot manage money, and it is regional Victorian families who are paying the price. In Melbourne we see billions flow into new train stations and dirty big holes under the city, into road upgrades and sporting facilities in the city, but out in regions like Mildura and right across regional Victoria we are left with crumbling roads, critically underfunded hospitals and classrooms that if they are not falling down are absolutely bursting at the seams. It is not just about dollars and cents – I know we are talking about the budget and there clearly is no sense – but about fairness and equity. Families in regional Victoria pay the same taxes. Actually those out in the regions pay enormously higher rates than those in the city, which is an inarguable fact. Our rates for a house in Mildura are triple the council rates if you were to live in Toorak or Prahran – triple the rates – and that is before adding on that extra emergency services tax. They are already triple.

And you have got a choice of hospitals. In Mildura you have got the public or the private, and that is about it.

We have got large local government areas, and in a rate capping environment like this we see more councils that are becoming less and less sustainable. We heard Mayor Shane Sali of Greater Shepparton talk at regional cities a couple of weeks ago – and I am glad the Minister for Local Government is sitting at the table – talk about the cost shifting of this government onto local councils and what they have to deliver, including things like their road repairs post the 2022–23 floods. The Buloke Shire Council, Minister, is still waiting on \$60 million to \$80 million in 2022–23 flood funding, which they have not been reimbursed for. There was a notice of motion moved at the council meeting this week.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): Order! Member for Mildura, direct your remarks through the Chair.

Jade BENHAM: The minister will be getting a letter next week after a notice of motion was moved at the Buloke Shire Council meeting last week, because they are literally a tiny rural council that just cannot survive. They struggle to be able to provide just the essential services of local government, much less renew their assets or do any of the pretty, shiny stuff.

Let us talk about health. I touched on it before: Mildura Base Public Hospital – 130 beds for a catchment of 75,000 people. If you do the math, that is one bed for every 577 people.

Michaela Settle interjected.

Jade BENHAM: This government bang on about it – the member for Eureka continues to bang on about it. I cannot understand what she is saying, and I do not particularly care. But when we talk about that public hospital, the government was supposed to invest in that hospital and upgrades and make it actually fit for purpose and fit for the community. That has failed to happen. I did actually manage after an adjournment matter a couple of weeks ago to sit down and have a very productive conversation with the Minister for Health. But one bed for every 577 people in Mildura – you can find hospitals with double or triple that capacity for a much smaller catchment in suburbs around Melbourne. There is dangerous inequity in the regions, and it costs lives every day.

Take transport. Our highways are crumbling. The rail network is neglected – no passenger train, despite promises, and no plans to reinstate it, as quoted by the Minister for Public and Active Transport in budget estimates earlier this year. Meanwhile billions are being poured into a Suburban Rail Loop because Labor cannot manage money and they cannot manage projects. Regional Victorians are not asking for gold-plated, shiny projects here. All we are asking for is the basics: safe roads, an actual train – much less a decent train, but decent rail freight would be good – and the infrastructure to live, work and thrive in the regions. Let me remind everyone in this house once again: without us in the regions you would be naked, hungry and sober.

Let us talk about waste in management. Instead of fixing these fundamentals, this government has blown billions on waste, billions on blowouts on the West Gate Tunnel. They are billions over budget.

Kim Wells interjected.

Jade BENHAM: Blowouts on North East link – thank you, member for Rowville – a \$10 billion blowout. The Suburban Rail Loop has got no business case, but, what, \$200 billion – throw that up in the air, put it on a dartboard and throw something at it, and that is what it might cost. But then, when it actually comes to getting invoices and signing, who actually knows? Because there is no transparency at all.

Nick Staikos interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister at the table, just because it is the end of the day does not give you permission to interject.

Jade BENHAM: Meanwhile schools in regional Victoria are fundraising for basic equipment. There are classrooms being held together with chipboard because they are being eaten out by termites, and this has been going on for the past five years.

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

Bills

Statute Law Revision Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Mary-Anne Thomas:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Steve Dimopoulos:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

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

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (75): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Sam Groth, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, David Hodgett, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Emma Kealy, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen

Matthews-Ward, Tim McCurdy, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Michaela Settle, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Bridget Vallence, Emma Vulin, Peter Walsh, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson, Jess Wilson

Noes (3): Gabrielle de Vietri, Tim Read, Ellen Sandell

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medication Administration in Residential Aged Care) Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Mary-Anne Thomas:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Rulings from the Chair

Points of order

The SPEAKER (17:07): I wish to make some comments about points of order. A point of order is a way for a member to draw the Chair's attention to a situation where the standing orders or other rules of the house are not being followed or observed. The Chair rules on the point of order so that proceedings can continue. The Chair rules on the point of order when they have heard sufficient information or argument to understand the issues and form a view about how to rule. Sometimes where a matter is highly technical or complicated, the Chair may wish to hear a range of views before ruling. On other occasions the issues are more straightforward and the Chair is ready to rule without any elaboration. Speaker Smith's substantial rulings about points of order set out that the Chair is not obliged to hear any argument or commentary at all on a point of order. On other occasions the Chair will find elaboration useful. In response to a point of order raised by the member for Eildon in question time today, when the Leader of the Nationals stated that the point of order was about the minister debating the question, that was sufficient information for the Chair to understand which rule of the house was in play and how to rule on the point of order.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (17:09): (1290) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek is increased funding to the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA). The minister will be well aware that following its formation back in 2020, the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority manages a vast area of the Great Ocean Road and hinterland. When the agency was set up in 2020, it managed around 950 hectares. That has now grown, and this coming summer it will be 170,000 hectares. It is an enormous and important area of our state. It will, over the coming spring and summer months, play home to many, many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of visitors. There are enormous resource constraints on the public foreshores, piers, jetties, beach accesses, public open space, rubbish collection, toilets – all manner of basic infrastructure that this authority is now responsible for.

It is of huge concern to the local community that this agency, GORCAPA, does not have sufficient ongoing funding to ensure the proper maintenance of these very, very important places and spaces. So the action I am seeking from the minister is to ensure that there is adequate funding – an increase in funding – for the authority so that it can maintain these very important places along the Great Ocean Road.

In particular I draw the minister's attention to the inability in recent years of the agency to properly manage rubbish collection on foreshores after peak visitor times such as, for example, the Pier to Pub day in Lorne and other coastal events in Torquay, Apollo Bay, Anglesea and so on. I also draw the minister's attention to the basic toilet facilities, which are very, very important, as people really only access the Great Ocean Road by car. They often travel quite some distance to get there, and they are an important amenity – not a very glamorous amenity, and certainly not an amenity that going to make postcards, but they are an important amenity – and they will need to be maintained and cleaned and managed effectively over the busy visitor period that we will be soon approaching, which extends from essentially the Melbourne Cup long weekend through to the end of Easter. Minister, I look forward to your prompt response and the support of this agency, which you and your government have set up but have not to date adequately funded to maintain the most basic of amenities in the region.

Monbulk electorate horticulture

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (17:12): (1291) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Agriculture, and the action that I seek is for an update from the minister on the supports available to the horticultural industry across my district of Monbulk. This week we have all been treated to the magnificent floral display in Queens Hall. I think I can almost say with complete authority that every MP loves this week, when the Nursery & Garden Industry Victoria turn up and change that hall into a paradise for us all to enjoy – a feast for the senses, if you may. The smells and the sights are sublime, and it has an amazing effect and calms us all.

The horticultural industry is an incredibly important one to the district of Monbulk. In the areas of Monbulk and Silvan and out towards Cockatoo, Gembrook and Macclesfield – around those areas – we have incredible growers doing amazing things, and across Wandin East as well. I know the member for Evelyn too enjoys some of those areas, as we share a boundary. This industry is vital for us here in Victoria, where we produce incredible amounts of green life, and it is vital for the country as well. It is an incredibly important industry for the people of Monbulk but also for all of us here who enjoy green life. It is vital for us all. Those out west who are greening their parts of the state are using a lot of plants coming from my district. I am very proud, if you cannot tell already, Deputy Speaker. So I look forward to the minister's response.

[NAME AWAITING VERIFICATION]

I thank Nursery & Garden Industry Victoria for their work and the effort they have put in. I give a shout-out to Emily, who is the designer; to the growers I have spoken with, Warners, Beamons and Fleming's, who I have had the chance to catch up with; and most of all to my beautiful primary school students from Monbulk Primary who were there on Tuesday talking with great knowledge, much more than I contain, about all things plant life. How wonderful were they, Deputy Speaker? I am sure you would agree that they were exceptional. To the four of them: well done on what you did.

Latrobe Valley mental health services

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (17:14): (1292) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Mental Health in the other place, and the action I seek is for the minister to have a meeting with local mental health practitioners and me down in the Latrobe Valley to discuss the dire need for more acute inpatient mental health care services for the Latrobe Valley. As Gippsland's main acute mental health care provider, Latrobe Regional Health is overwhelmed and under-resourced for the volume of mental health presentations it receives. LRH's 2023–24 annual report confirms there is a mental health crisis in the Latrobe Valley and, alarmingly, only 36 per cent of mental health patients presenting to the ED were offered a bed within the clinically recommended 8 hours – down from 53 per cent the year prior. Despite the establishment of a \$10 million emergency department mental health hub, LRH is failing to meet the service targets and is the worst performing public hospital in the state in terms of meeting mental health community services targeted hours.

This is not a reflection on the hardworking staff or hospital management but a symptom of chronic underfunding, under-resourcing and neglect from the Allan Labor government. Our local health professionals work tirelessly to achieve the best outcomes for our community, but they are fighting with their hands tied behind their backs, and many valley residents are suffering in silence. The Latrobe Valley LGA has the third-highest rate of prescription dependence for mental health conditions in the state, yet many go undiagnosed and untreated because they simply cannot access the care they need. The 31 beds available at LRH for acute inpatient mental health care are woefully inadequate. The extra six beds offered for the onsite mental health hub do not go close to addressing the critical need for more inpatient services. Labor's closure of the Latrobe Health Assembly and subsequent defunding of mental health initiatives like Live4Life and the WES will only increase demand for acute mental health care and exacerbate this issue facing LRH. LRH is not equipped to shoulder any more of this burden. The hospital and its hardworking staff need help, and they need it in the form of more funding and more beds for inpatient mental health services. What we need is an expansion to the mental health unit at LRH, and nothing less will cut it.

Footscray Hospital

Katie HALL (Footscray) (17:16): (1293) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts. As we get closer to the very exciting opening of the \$1.5 billion new Footscray Hospital, opening early next year, attention is also turning to the existing Footscray Hospital site at Gordon Street, which for many decades has served our community proudly. And now the entire inner-west community looks forward to what is next for this key site in our community. I have long been advocating for affordable housing, for community services and of course for a significant parcel of open space to be provided at the site when it is developed. I understand that Development Victoria is currently formulating a master plan following an extensive community engagement process. The action I am seeking is for the minister to visit the existing Footscray Hospital site with me to explore the potential for housing, community services and open space on the site.

Community safety

Jess WILSON (Kew) (17:18): (1294) My adjournment is for the Premier. The action I am seeking is for the Premier to address the terrifying increase in home invasions in Kew by restoring consequences for violent offenders and fixing Victoria's broken bail system. Reports of an alleged

violent home invasion in Kew East, in which a father was stabbed by intruders, are shocking and deeply disturbing. No family should ever have to endure such fear and trauma, but sadly, this is becoming a common occurrence in our community. On 6 March, following a terrifying aggravated burglary in Sackville Street, I raised an adjournment with the Premier demanding urgent action on our state's weak bail laws and machete laws. Almost six months later I am yet to receive a response. On 20 May, after five balaclava-hooded offenders wielding machetes kicked down the front door of a home in Kew, I raised an adjournment with the Premier urging her to immediately classify machetes as a prohibited weapon. I still have not received a response from the Premier. My office is inundated with constituents sharing their experiences of crime, and the statistics do not lie. Over the past year residential aggravated burglaries have risen 66 per cent and motor vehicle theft has risen 151 per cent in Boroondara. It is unacceptable that the Premier is continuing to fail to take the concerns of our community seriously, but sadly, it is unsurprising. The Premier has a track record of doing too little too late. Following are just a few examples. The government has sat on the Victorian Ombudsman's working with children check recommendations for years, only now scrambling to act.

The government was dragged into reversing its disastrous weakening of bail laws in this state, but offenders who breach bail continue to walk free. The government finally succumbed to pressure from this side of the house to actually ban machetes in this state, but they have still delayed action for months. Enough is enough. Victorians deserve a government which is proactive in addressing their concerns, not one which continues to provide bandaids solutions once the problems have spiralled out of control. My community and the family in Kew East will never be able to recover from that terrifying incident of hooded offenders coming into their house, separating father and mother and stabbing the father in the face, in the arms, in his eyes. That sort of trauma should not be happening. People should not be afraid in their own homes in this state. I call on the Premier to actually address these concerns, listen to the terrified victims in this state and strengthen Victoria's bail laws so they actually work to protect Victorians.

Better Health Network, South Melbourne

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (17:21): (1295) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Health, the Honourable Mary-Anne Thomas MP. I rise to call on the Minister for Health to visit the Better Health Network in South Melbourne to witness firsthand the outstanding work being undertaken to improve health outcomes for the local community. The Better Health Network has established itself as a cornerstone of community-based health care, providing a wide range of services that extend well beyond primary care, from general practice and allied health through to mental health support, preventative health programs and initiatives. To reduce health inequities, the network is a vital resource for residents across Melbourne's inner south. What makes the Better Health Network particularly significant is its commitment to accessible, patient-centred care. The South Melbourne site has become a trusted health hub for people from diverse backgrounds, including those who may otherwise face barriers to accessing timely medical treatment. It plays an important role in responding to the complex and growing health needs of the community, whether that is through chronic disease management, integrated mental health services or health promotion activities designed to keep people well and out of hospital. The network also contributes significantly to workforce development, with its strong focus on training and professional development. It provides opportunities for emerging health professionals to gain valuable experience in community health settings. This is critical at a time when strengthening the health workforce is a key priority for Victoria. A ministerial visit would provide an opportunity to showcase these achievements and to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the sector. It would also allow the minister to hear directly from staff, patients and community members about the impact of these services, particularly as demand for integrated community-based care continues to grow.

Middle East conflict

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (17:22): (1296) My adjournment tonight is to the Premier. The action I seek is for the Victorian Labor government to lobby their colleagues in the Albanese Labor

government to impose sanctions on Israel, given the ongoing genocide and starvation they are perpetrating in Palestine, and end Victoria's relationship with the weapons companies who are making genocide possible. Next week dedicated, heartbroken community members in my electorate will read out the names of more than 18,000 children killed in Gaza. There are so many murdered children that it is expected to take more than 30 continuous hours to read them all out. My constituents have asked me to join them.

Today I only have 3 minutes to speak in Parliament, but I want to read out some of the names of those 18,000 Palestinian children, starting with the babies who did not make it to their first birthday: (1) Noura Walid Abdulsalam Shaheen, zero years old; (2) Maryam Nour Al-Din Wael Daban, zero years old; (3) Fatima Louay Rafiq Al-Sultan, zero years old; (4) Watan Mohammad Abd Al-Rahim Al-Madhoon, zero years old; (5) Mohammad Al-Jabbari Said Misbah Al-Khour, zero years old; (6) Diyaa Ahmed Abd Al-Aati Saleh Moussa, zero years old; (7) Oday Mohammed Rafiq Al-Sultan, zero years old; (8) Mohammed Nidal Hisham Attallah; (9) Ahmad Shadi Talal Al-Haddad, zero years old; (10) Masa Mohammed Youssef Nasr, zero years old; (11) Ayat Abd Al-Aziz Omar Farwana, zero years old; (12) Maalek Mohammed Shafeeq Abu-Al-Kas, zero years old; (13) Sarah Abd Al-Rahman Mohammed Hamad, zero years old; (14) Mohammed Saleh Mahmoud Al-Deiri, zero years old; (15) Mecca Ahmed Eid Abu-Sherekh, zero years old.

These names are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the babies and children that have been killed by Israel in Gaza. We cannot say it does not have anything to do with us, because in the face of such atrocities there is something that we can do here in Victoria, and our humanity demands that we must do it.

Legacy Week

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (17:25): (1297) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Veterans. The action I seek is for the minister to join me in a visit to the Fawkner RSL. Next week is the Legacy Week appeal, and I thank the minister for inviting the wonderful Legacy team into Parliament this week. Over 100 years ago Legacy made a promise to support families of veterans who had lost their lives or health in service to our country. Today Legacy continues that promise, supporting 30,000 partners and children of veterans across Australia. My husband Joe is one of the many who have benefitted from Legacy's support. His father Max served on four ships during the Second World War, including on the HMS Shropshire, where the father of the member for East Gippsland also served. Max narrowly survived the sinking of the HMAS Canberra and lost a brother at El Alamein, and another was taken prisoner of war. Like so many veterans and our emergency services heroes, Max carried the impact of these experiences for the rest of his life. I encourage everyone to support the Legacy appeal, whether by buying a badge or one of the adorable Legacy bears representing our army, navy, air force or medical corps.

In light of this week's tragedies, I also encourage everyone to support the families of our fallen through the Victoria Police Legacy and Blue Ribbon foundations. I take this opportunity to pay my respects to Detective Leading Senior Constable Neal Thompson and Senior Constable Vadim De Waart. My thoughts are with their families, colleagues and the officer injured alongside them. So many brave men and women put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe, and they pay a high price in doing so.

Our RSLs and Legacies play a vital role in supporting our veterans and their families and bringing communities together. I thank Ken White and the team at Glenroy RSL for their ongoing work, including their recent commemoration of the 59th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, hosted with the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia at the north-west Melbourne sub-branch. The Victoria Remembers grant program is currently open until 15 September, and I have encouraged local RSLs to apply, including the Turkish RSL sub-branch led by dedicated president Ramazan Altintas. Fawkner RSL has already benefited from Victorian government support, receiving \$37,000 for solar panels and \$13,500 for kitchen and storeroom upgrades. I warmly welcome the minister to visit and meet with

the dedicated president Michael Brennan, who volunteers countless hours to support our local veterans and service members.

Wombat protection

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (17:28): (1298) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek is urgent and ongoing funding for Mange Management's wombat treatment program, which does so much in my electorate as well as across Victoria. Right now, as I speak, wombats in Warrandyte are being eaten alive by sarcoptic mange, an invasive disease introduced by early settlers. It is a slow, preventable cruelty. The mites burrow under the skin and the hide thickens and cracks into painful infected lesions, and wombats scratch until they bleed; their fur falls out, their hearing and sight fade and they grow weak and stop eating, and within about three months most die. In some areas infection reaches 90 per cent, and we are seeing the same pattern here. This disease does not stop at the burrow; it can spread to other wildlife, to pets and to livestock. Wombats matter. Their digging turns soil and their burrows become life-saving shelter for other species, especially after fire. When a wombat disappears, the whole bush feels it.

But there is a cure. We can save these wombats, and they are being saved by Mange Management, a remarkable grassroots organisation that punches well above its weight. Powered almost entirely by volunteers, they are the only dedicated wombat mange treatment group in Victoria. They have treated thousands of wombats, trained Parks Victoria rangers and built a statewide response network, handling more than 1600 cases every single year.

In 2020 the government backed this work with \$100,000 a year for four years. However, that funding ended in May. Without it, volunteers will face huge personal costs, response times will slow and hundreds of wombats will die unnecessarily. I acknowledge that the government has committed to undertaking a population count of Victoria's wombats. However, further funding is required to actually help to save Victoria's precious wombats. I know my community cares deeply about wildlife and the people who step up to protect it. I also thank Mange Management Victoria. The volunteers there do wonderful work, and they go out of their way to protect these precious wombats. This is a small, targeted investment with a large impact on animal welfare and ecosystem health. I trust that the government will step up and keep funding this amazing group that does so much for our local ecosystem and for our state.

Coburg RSL

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (17:31): (1299) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Veterans, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit the Coburg RSL to meet with local veterans and update them on the work the Victorian Labor government is doing to support our veterans community and their families. The Coburg RSL remains one of the oldest continuous local RSL sub-branches in Victoria and indeed Australia. First established on 1 December 1918 when a group of passionate returned service personnel from World War I, led by Herbert Rouvray, established the branch with a charter from the RSL, over the years since it has very much grown into a vital part of the Coburg community, with its members and volunteers shaping the legacy of Melbourne's oldest continuing sub-branch. Its servicemen and women over the years have fought or nursed in virtually every conflict, confrontation or peacekeeping operation Australia has participated in, including World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Gulf War, and in Somalia, East Timor, Solomon Islands, Iraq, Afghanistan and many other places around the world. Today's members remain just as dedicated as ever in commemorating and remembering the service and sacrifices of our local veterans, including via the annual Anzac Day and Remembrance Day services and by supporting the wellbeing of contemporary veterans. But it has also become increasingly a community hub, as referred to in the *Age* article of 17 August by Madeleine Heffernan:

Coburg RSL is thriving thanks to its live music, scarf sales and army of volunteers.

...

It sells veteran-style scarves and has the mantra, “all welcome”, from babies to local hipsters and elderly veterans. The sub-branch’s membership numbers have grown from fewer than 200 –

when it was on the verge of closing some years ago –

to close to 1000.

...

At 107 years of age, Coburg RSL is a survivor.

I commend the role of all the Coburg RSL volunteers over those years, more recently and today in making it the successful veterans and community hub that it has become, and especially today’s president Michael Pianta, a solicitor by day who once served in East Timor and Afghanistan.

Our government continues to work and support veterans across the state and locally through a range of measures, including the ongoing support for the Shrine of Remembrance, the ongoing support for veterans commemoration and recognition across the state through the Veterans Card, the veterans public sector employment strategy and support for the Coburg RSL, including funding towards their new accessibility ramp, which we look forward to opening in due course when the minister may be able to attend.

With this week also being Legacy Week, I would like to pay tribute to the work that Coburg RSL does to support the legacy and wellbeing of veterans and families – 30,000-odd across Victoria. That is why I was honoured to last year also visit Gallipoli and pay my respects with the member for Morwell to local veterans who lost their lives, whose names remain immortalised on the wall of Coburg RSL. Two of them are Private Francis Joseph Docter, 22 years old, who died on 25 November 1915, buried at Shell Green Cemetery, and Private William Thomas Libbis, age unknown, killed on 7 August 1915, buried at Quinns Post Cemetery. We look forward to welcoming the Minister for Veterans. Lest we forget.

Responses

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (17:34): If I first respond to the member for Morwell’s question, representing the Minister for Mental Health in this place, I concur with the member in relation to the great work of the Latrobe Regional Health team in some great facilities there, but I take on board the concern of the member with regard to the mental health funding. Of course our government has made record investments in mental health care in this state, introducing Australia’s first royal commission into mental health and accepting each and every one of those recommendations, but I will seek further information and ensure it is forwarded to the member for Morwell.

The member for Albert Park has asked me to attend with her to visit Better Health Network in South Melbourne, and I very much look forward to doing this. The last time I visited Better Health Network was with the federal health minister Mark Butler, and I was able to show him or talk to him about the fact that Victoria’s community health network is a model for what a reformed primary care system could really look like. We are the only state that continues to deliver on the promise of community health that was first articulated and funded by one of Australia’s greatest prime ministers, Gough Whitlam. Here in Victoria we have kept that promise of community health delivering free care and accessible care to some of our most marginal communities. I do very much look forward to that, and we will continue to champion community health and the role that it plays in our healthcare system.

The member for Monbulk raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Agriculture, and that is that she receive an update on supports that are available to Victoria’s fantastic horticultural industry, all of which we saw on display during this week of course. The member for Footscray raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts in the other place, and the action that the member is seeking is that the minister join her on a site visit to the existing Footscray Hospital to see the potential and opportunities that exist to meet the needs of the member’s community with regard to housing, with regard to community services and with regard to more open space.

The member for Kew raised a matter for the attention of the Premier, and the action that the member seeks is that the Premier address the increase in home invasions in the member's electorate. The member for Melbourne raised a matter for the attention of the Premier, and the action she seeks is that the Premier lobby the Albanese government to implement sanctions on Israel. The member for Broadmeadows raised a matter for the Minister for Veterans. The action that she has sought is that the minister join her at Fawkner RSL. I am sure she very much looks forward to doing that. I also agree with the member about how great it was to have Legacy in here. I have added to my collection of Legacy teddies. I am sure we all have.

The member for Warrandyte raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, and the action she seeks is funding to a local community environment group called Mange Management. The member for Pascoe Vale raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Veterans also, and the action he seeks is that the minister join him at Coburg RSL to show the Allan Labor government's unwavering support to veterans in his community. The member for Polwarth raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, and the action that he sought was that there be increased funding for the Great Ocean Road parks authority.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:38 pm.