

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2022

hansard.parliament.vic.gov.au

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

The ministry

Premier	The Hon. DM Andrews MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop and Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery	The Hon. JM Allan MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J Symes MLC
Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Agriculture	The Hon. GA Tierney MLC
Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Trade	The Hon. TH Pallas MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. EA Blandthorn MP
Minister for Child Protection and Family Services and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers	The Hon. CW Brooks MP
Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention and Minister for Racing	The Hon. AR Carbines MP
Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Industry Support and Recovery and Minister for Business Precincts	The Hon. BA Carroll MP
Minister for Energy, Minister for Environment and Climate Action and Minister for Solar Homes	The Hon. L D’Ambrosio MP
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. S Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. MM Horne MP
Minister for Education and Minister for Women	The Hon. NM Hutchins MP
Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support and Minister for Fishing and Boating	The Hon. S Kilkenny MP
Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy and Minister for Veterans ..	The Hon. SL Leane MLC
Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services and Minister for Housing	The Hon. DJ Pearson MP
Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business and Minister for Resources	The Hon. JL Pulford MLC
Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Equality	The Hon. H Shing MLC
Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport and Minister for Youth	The Hon. RL Spence MP
Minister for Workplace Safety and Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep	The Hon. I Stitt MLC
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. M Thomas MP
Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Treaty and First Peoples ...	The Hon. G Williams MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr SJ McGhie MP

**OFFICE-HOLDERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION**

Speaker

The Hon. JM EDWARDS

Deputy Speaker

Ms N SULEYMAN

Acting Speakers

Mr Blackwood, Mr J Bull, Ms Connolly, Ms Couzens, Ms Crugnale, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Mr Taylor and Ms Ward

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

The Hon. DM ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

The Hon. JM ALLAN

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. MJ GUY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party

Mr DJ SOUTHWICK

Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. PL WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals

Ms E KEALY

Leader of the House

Ms EA BLANDTHORN

Manager of Opposition Business

Ms LE STALEY

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

Council: Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A Young

Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Ms T Burrows

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Ms Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Maas, Mr Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	McGhie, Mr Stephen John	Melton	ALP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Brayne, Mr Chris	Nepean	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Britnell, Ms Roma	South-West Coast	LP	Newbury, Mr James	Brighton	LP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Ind
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David	Gippsland South	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Pakula, Mr Martin Philip	Keysborough	ALP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Werribee	ALP
Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan	Niddrie	ALP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Cheeseman, Mr Darren Leicester	South Barwon	ALP	Read, Dr Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Connolly, Ms Sarah	Tarneit	ALP	Richardson, Ms Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Couzens, Ms Christine Anne	Geelong	ALP	Richardson, Mr Timothy Noel	Mordialloc	ALP
Crugnale, Ms Jordan Alessandra	Bass	ALP	Riordan, Mr Richard Vincent	Polwarth	LP
Cupper, Ms Ali	Mildura	Ind	Rowswell, Mr Brad	Sandringham	LP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Ryan, Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen	Oakleigh	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Settle, Ms Michaela	Buninyong	ALP
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Fowles, Mr Will	Burwood	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Fregon, Mr Matt	Mount Waverley	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Staikos, Mr Nicholas	Bentleigh	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Bulleen	LP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hall, Ms Katie	Footscray	ALP	Tak, Mr Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
Halse, Mr Dustin	Ringwood	ALP	Taylor, Mr Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Hamer, Mr Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Theophanous, Ms Katerina	Northcote	ALP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Vallence, Ms Bridget	Evelyn	LP
Horne, Ms Melissa Margaret	Williamstown	ALP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Kennedy, Mr John Ormond	Hawthorn	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Labor Party; Greens—The Greens;
Ind—Independent; LP—Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals.

Legislative Assembly committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

Ms Addison, Mr Blackwood, Ms Couzens, Mr Eren, Ms Ryan, Ms Theophanous and Mr Wakeling.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Ms Addison, Mr Fowles, Ms Green, Mr Hamer, Mr McCurdy, Ms McLeish and Mr Morris.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

Mr Angus, Mr Battin, Ms Couzens, Ms Kealy, Ms Settle, Ms Theophanous and Mr Tak.

Privileges Committee

Mr Allan, Mr Carroll, Ms Hennessy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Mr Pakula, Ms Ryan, Ms Staley and Mr Wells.

Standing Orders Committee

The Speaker, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Fregon, Ms McLeish, Ms Settle, Ms Sheed, Ms Staley, Ms Suleyman and Mr Walsh.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee

Assembly: Ms Allan, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr Pakula, Mr R Smith, Mr Walsh and Mr Wells.

Council: Mr Bourman, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Ms Symes and Ms Tierney.

Electoral Matters Committee

Assembly: Ms Hall, Dr Read and Mr Rowswell.

Council: Mr Erdogan, Mrs McArthur, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Ms Lovell, Mr Quilty and Mr Tarlamis.

House Committee

Assembly: The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr T Bull, Ms Crugnale, Mr Fregon, Ms Sandell, Ms Staley and Ms Suleyman.

Council: The President (*ex officio*), Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Mr Leane, Ms Lovell and Ms Stitt.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Assembly: Mr Halse, Mr Maas, Mr Rowswell, Mr Taylor, Ms Ward and Mr Wells.

Council: Mr Grimley.

Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee

Assembly: Mr J Bull, Mr Eren, Ms Kealy, Mr Sheed, Ms Ward and Mr Wells.

Council: Ms Crozier and Mr Erdogan.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Assembly: Ms Connolly, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr Newbury, Mr D O'Brien, Ms Richards and Mr Richardson.

Council: Mrs McArthur and Ms Taylor.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Mr Morris.

Council: Ms Patten and Ms Watt.

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Thursday, 24 February 2022

The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 9.32 am and read the prayer.

Announcements**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

The SPEAKER (09:32): We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future, and elders from other communities who may be here today.

Documents**DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET**

Victorian Government Annual Report 2021: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (09:33): I table, by leave, the Victorian government report 2021 on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

DOCUMENTS**Incorporated list as follows:**

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT—The Clerk tabled the following documents under Acts of Parliament:

Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority—Report 2020–21

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978:

Orders under s 17B granting licences over:

Flinders Foreshore Reserve

Old Springfield Cheese Factory Reserve

Order under s 17D granting a lease over Old Springfield Cheese Factory Reserve

National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioners and Ombudsman—Report 2020–21

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 156/2021, 17, 18, 19

Documents under s 16B in relation to the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*—Determination of Gaming Machine Entitlement Allocation and Transfer Rules.

PROCLAMATIONS—Under Standing Order 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamations fixing operative dates:

Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Fairness) Act 2021—Remaining provisions—1 March 2022 (*Gazette S87, 22 February 2022*)

Terrorism (Community Protection) Amendment Act 2021—Sections 5(3), 8(1) (other than paragraph (b)), 9(2) (other than paragraph (b)), 9(3), 12, 13, 15(7), 15(8), 15(9), 15(10), 15(11), 17, 18(2) and 29—24 February 2022 (*Gazette S87, 22 February 2022*).

Business of the house**ADJOURNMENT**

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (09:34): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 8 March 2022.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements**COUNTRY WEEK TENNIS, SWAN HILL**

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (09:35): I congratulate the Swan Hill Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club on the excellent job they did staging this year's hugely successful Country Week tennis. Last year's event was cancelled with less than 24 hours notice when Victoria went into a snap lockdown for just six COVID cases—and I emphasise six COVID cases, and it was called off. Full credit to the 200 volunteers, led by club president Christian Devlin, who gave it another go this year—92 world-class lawn courts at one venue, the most courts at one venue in the Southern Hemisphere. 1200 players enjoyed the tennis after missing last year, and they all enjoyed the after-match socialising that has become synonymous with Country Week tennis in Swan Hill. A shout-out to the major sponsors, Swan Hill club, Murray Downs club and Spoons Riverside, whose support is critical in staging this particular tournament. Next January Swan Hill will get the opportunity to host the Australian Tennis Seniors Championships—again, over 1000 players in Swan Hill to enjoy the tennis and what Swan Hill as a region has to offer.

SILVIO PITRUZZELLO, OAM

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke—Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Youth) (09:36): I rise to acknowledge and congratulate Greenvale local Silvio Pitruzzello, who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia on Australia Day this year. Mr Pitruzzello, who is the general manager of his family's business, Pantalica Cheese, in Thomastown, has been working in the cheese industry for 40 years, and while this will give away his age I will note that he started helping out when he was nine years old, so his dedication and his knowledge of this industry is immense. The family business, Pantalica Cheese, is now a pillar in the local dairy industry, employing around 170 people and producing award-winning cheese that is not only available in major supermarkets in Australia but also exported elsewhere. Mr Pitruzzello is also the vice-president of the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Melbourne. Passionate about his diasporic community, Mr Pitruzzello aspires to serve and lift the Italian community in Melbourne.

I also want to acknowledge Silvio Pitruzzello's father, Sebastiano, or Sam as he was commonly known, who was posthumously recognised in the Australia Day honours list in 2017. Both Silvio and Sam are known by many people around here—the member for Thomastown for one. They are both very deserving recipients of these honours. I am very proud that they were my local constituents. I consider them both wonderful people, both friends and both part of a very beautiful family.

CROYDON ELECTORATE LEVEL CROSSING REMOVALS

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (09:37): I rise today to address the obvious lack of care and consideration afforded to residents who live in Mooroolbark and have been directly impacted by the level crossing removal works currently nearing completion. The level crossing removal authority, under instruction from the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, appear to have a complete disregard for anyone who lives near the works and must put up with the desolate concrete jungle that has been left behind.

As part of the process for removing level crossings the authority conducts community consultation sessions with the public. Consultation means to formally discuss or consult on matters. The reality is that the community is told what will happen with no real opportunity given to residents to request any amendments to the authority's plans, even though residents are the ones left to deal with the destruction of amenities after the fact. The artist impressions sold to the community at the start of the project are not reflected in the results. The promises of preservation of vegetation have not been a reality. Large amounts of additional plants were sneakily ripped out, and replanting is not even starting to meet the community's expectations.

My office has been inundated with incredibly upset residents who are left with a massive concrete wall facing their homes, reflecting light and heat towards them. Replanting to date has been minimal,

and constant contact by my office to the authority has basically resulted in a ‘too bad’ response: ‘There will be no further discussion entered into’. The residents are not against the level crossing removal; they just want what they were promised. With Croydon station having its level crossing removed shortly, there needs to be an actual open and transparent relationship with the community, not an imaginary one, and residents must be given the chance to contribute on matters that affect the value of their homes and the quality of their lives.

DAVID ARDEN

Ms D’AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (09:39): I rise to congratulate proud Kokatha/Gunditjmara man David Arden, a noted guitarist, singer and storyteller who lives in my electorate of Mill Park. Through the Andrews Labor government’s music works grants program David has recently received a grant of \$35 000 to support him to produce his fifth album, *Meetra, the Ballad of James Arden: Rise Up*. His fifth album follows the story of his great-grandfather, who was the keeper of traditional knowledge of the Gunditjmara people, who are from the west of Victoria.

During his 37-year career David has performed with many influential artists, including the likes of Archie Roach, Paul Kelly and the late Ruby Hunter. He has also toured extensively both here and overseas as a co-musical director of the renowned Indigenous music theatre organisation the Black Arm Band. David’s body of work provides a valuable insight into Aboriginal heritage and contemporary Indigenous culture. His music follows his family’s journey over four generations and the hope, joy and struggles of both his traditional and his urban life. His songs are inspired by love of country and his family, with whom he shares a special spiritual and cultural connection.

I am so privileged to say that there are many First Nations people who live in my electorate, and it is great to see that the government can support First Nations people like David to tell their stories. I am very much looking forward to listening to David’s latest album when it is released in 2023.

ST PETER’S KINDERGARTEN, BRIGHTON

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:40): Brighton’s St Peter’s Kindergarten recently held a welcome to country and smoking ceremony for their young children. The children loved the experience, with four-year-old Fiona saying, ‘This land belongs to the Aboriginal people. They have been here for a really long time, before we lived here, and we need to look after the land’. Congratulations to the whole team on the wonderful initiative.

HAMPTON RSL

Mr NEWBURY: Hampton RSL have shown incredible community leadership in the way they pass on history to the next generation through their Gallipoli Memorial Garden school program. I recently joined Hampton Primary School to visit the garden to learn about the 92 Bayside diggers who fell at Gallipoli. Thank you to president Lieutenant Commander Helen Ward and chairman of Friends of Gallipoli John Basarin for the school program.

BRIGHTON BEACH BATHING BOXES

Mr NEWBURY: The iconic Brighton bathing boxes are under threat. Several of the boxes at the south end of the beach are under threat of tide and erosion. Brighton harbour was recently dredged to remove built-up sand. Instead of sending the dredged sand to Brighton Beach the Labor government took it to Elwood Beach. Labor is doing nothing to protect the iconic Brighton bathing boxes.

BRIGHTON ELECTORATE ROAD SAFETY

Mr NEWBURY: Brighton’s road safety is ignored by Labor. Horrified residents often witness dangers at the intersection of Dendy and Hampton streets. VicRoads has advised residents that an upgrade is unlikely to be implemented. The intersection is near to the notorious Dendy village, where

repeated calls for upgrades to pedestrian safety have shamefully fallen on deaf ears. Labor needs to stop ignoring road safety issues in Brighton.

DENISE MARGARET ALLEN

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (09:42): I rise to pay tribute to the former member for Benalla Denise Allen, who passed away recently after a brave cancer battle. Denise was the first Labor member for Benalla in 96 years when she won the by-election in May 2000. She was also the electorate's first female representative. I was working for the former member for Geelong, Mr Trezise, at the time and while on leave I worked on the by-election campaign with many party members who are now colleagues in this place, including the members for Sydenham, Yan Yean, Narre Warren North and Altona, and of course the Premier.

Local branch members and community supporters rallied around Denise and her campaign for ambulance services, upgrades to Kirwans Bridge in Nagambie, safer roads and funds for bush nursing hospitals. There were many town hall style meetings across this vast electorate, and Denise campaigned with passion and grace. Her empathy and engagement with locals was sincere and infectious. Denise lived her values—her Labor values. I spent the by-election day—a cold May day—at the Merton church hall booth, and there was support there for Denise, as there was right across the electorate. Many campaign workers had been billeted at homes of generous locals who were keen to help. Denise can take great credit for her capacity to bring people together, and her clarion call was a demand for a fair share for country Victoria.

As Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers I also want to acknowledge Denise's lifelong advocacy for those with disability. She had a deep and personal understanding of these issues, and her work with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission on the disability reference group was greatly valued. My condolences to Denise's children Shae, Hayley and Paul. Vale, Denise Allen.

SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (09:43): I rise this morning to put on the record the views and concerns of thousands of ratepayers and ratepayer groups right across the state of Victoria. The government's announcement last Friday of their social housing and public housing reforms had a great sting in the tail. That sting was this government's desire to slug councils with up to \$140 million a year in lost income. This income will come directly out of the pockets of ratepayers from one end of the state to the other. This attack on ratepayers and local councils will see local ratepayers—residents who are already suffering huge cost-of-living burdens—having to see their rates increase yet again, and for people outside metro Melbourne that rate burden is already a massive impost on lifestyles, incomes and affordability. Not only that, everyone will suffer under this proposal that the government are sort of half backtracking on, but they have refused to come to Parliament to say they are going to abandon it. What is worse is that if the rates increase, that also means that the government will be forcing local councils to increase charges, fees and service levies or be forced to cut services. And because this is based around public housing, it is some of those communities who will be worst hit, because councils provide those important community services that so many people in our public housing rely on, and with \$140 million sucked out of the system it will be those who cannot afford it who will pay.

SYDENHAM ELECTORATE LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (09:45): It is all happening in the district of Sydenham. The Victorian Labor government's investments can be seen on every corner as you drive through. The Calder Park level crossing is one step closer to being gone for good, and local residents will have noticed preliminary works are already underway at the Calder Park level crossing as part of the initial investigations work that is happening. We know that this level crossing removal will help ease congestion and make our roads safer.

SYDENHAM ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

Ms HUTCHINS: Across in Taylors Lakes construction has begun and is burling along on the brand new ambulance station. The new station in Taylors Lakes will be in addition to the existing one in Delahey, and it will further drive down ambulance response times across my electorate. This is on top of all the great investments in health servicing my electorate, including the new Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital, the new Sunshine emergency ward and the future Footscray and Melton hospitals.

TAYLORS LAKES ROUNDABOUT REMOVALS

Ms HUTCHINS: I am also proud to give an update on the \$16 million removal of roundabouts on Sunshine Avenue and Melton Highway, which I announced along with the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Utility companies are relocating underground services, which are estimated to be completed at the end of this year. I know this is so welcomed by the local community. This is an area where there has been major congestion, and it is the scene of many accidents. By removing these roundabouts and installing new lights and new pedestrian crossing signals we know that this is going to deliver us a safer community.

LEWIS ROAD, WANTIRNA

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (09:46): A number of constituents have raised concerns about the excessive speed of motorists near local schools and aged care facilities on Lewis Road in Wantirna. Given the proximity to main roads, motorists are commonly travelling at excessive speeds near children and the elderly. On behalf of concerned residents I will raise this issue with both Knox police and Knox City Council.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

Mr WAKELING: I have been recently contacted by many concerned parents across Knox who have raised issues about the mental health of their children in the wake of six lockdowns. While schools have returned, many students are still experiencing poor mental health and these children need our help. The Liberals have committed to fixing this important issue by committing to providing an additional 2000 mental health practitioners in our schools. It is imperative that the state government adopts this plan to stop our kids from falling further behind.

COVID-19

Mr WAKELING: I have been contacted by many Knox parents raising serious concerns about the state government's mandate forcing schoolchildren in grades 3 to 6 to wear masks. This position is opposed by parents, the state opposition and infectious disease experts such as Professor Robert Booy. Our kids have suffered enough. We need to recover and rebuild and stop putting more pressure on students in our schools.

NIDDRIE ELECTORATE SMALL BUSINESS

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (09:48): I rise to pay tribute to small businesses in my local community. Last week I visited three small businesses in the local community—two local institutions that are moving on after many years and one new one that will become an institution in the future. Strudels Cafe has been on Keilor Road for a quarter of a century. Not many cafes last 25 years, but that is what Angelo and Rob Taranto managed to do with their wonderful employees, a vibrant friendly atmosphere and an outstanding menu. I congratulate them and wish them all the very best, and I congratulate new owner Pat, who is carrying on the tradition and meeting all the locals as we speak.

Can I also thank and congratulate Rapido Cycles. As a keen cyclist myself, I spent many a day down at Rapido Cycles. They have also served the community for nearly two decades. I congratulate all the

staff, but in particular owners Robert and Liz Bell, who help disadvantaged kids and support the local community in so many ways.

Finally, the Dance Centre by Jessica Crichton on Military Road, Avondale Heights, is set to be a new institution in the local community. I had the great pleasure to meet Jessica last week, a Keilor East resident who really is doing everything she can to support young families and young people with a really holistic approach to dance. There is a really incredible atmosphere, and I encourage all of the local community: if you have got young kids, go down and see Jess. You will not regret it. It is a wonderful dance studio that will become a future icon.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (09:49): Despite what I have read in today's paper, you can never trust Labor on taxes. That is why this statement condemns the government's housing tax on new developments, which will see \$20 000 added to the cost of median-priced homes in Melbourne. The government did not consult and has been forced to put the plan on hold while it provides modelling about what it will do to house prices. First home buyers and families making a start in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne would bear the brunt of Labor's newest tax. In Rowville sites like the Mirvac brickworks site will have this huge surcharge built into the price of a home. Before first home buyers see their \$10 000 first home owners grant, the government will have clawed back double that amount from this tax. This is a kick in the guts for people shut out by Melbourne's rocketing house prices.

Victoria has some of the highest property taxes in the nation. This tax would see Victoria pay more than 40 extra taxes and increased charges since Labor came to office. Social housing costs should not fall to the home owners who can least afford it. There are other ways to share the cost more widely. Billions of taxpayer dollars have disappeared in cost overruns on Labor's big projects—\$24 billion so far. Labor has put all its eggs into the infrastructure basket and is now scrambling to pay for the basics. How much social housing could have been paid for from these wasted billions of dollars?

MARIAM YACOUB IBRAHIM

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (09:51): In this business there is a lot of noise—some of it useful and some of it less so. Then there are those in our community who do not make a lot of noise; they just crack on and do what needs to be done. They learn, grow and serve others in their community, and it is one of those special gems in my electorate that I rise to acknowledge today. In December Mariam Yacoub Ibrahim won the Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Learner (Skills for Work) Award. The Learn Local Awards are presented by the Adult, Community and Further Education Board. Learn Local is a unique, community-based learning option, and the focus is squarely on the individual learner to learn digital, literacy, numeracy and employability skills for study, work and life.

Mariam's story is extraordinary. She arrived in Australia in 2015 after eight years in a Sudanese refugee camp. Mariam has studied many courses through the Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Flemington, including conversation skills, reading and pathways to employment. A big, heartfelt shout-out to the one and only Cathy Connop and her amazing team at Farnham Street for the support and mentoring they give to Mariam and so many others.

With the onset of the pandemic, Mariam's skills and learnings took on an urgent importance. She became deeply involved with CALD communities in the area, working long hours to ensure that community members had the most up-to-date public health information in their first language. Through 2021 Mariam held a role as a health concierge with Cohealth on the Flemington public housing estate. With no noise she just got on and did what needed to be done. These are the stories from our communities. We must keep telling them; they are important and they matter. Congratulations on the achievement— *(Time expired)*

REGIONAL RATES REFORM

Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (09:53): Last week I wrote to every state and federal regional MP in Victoria—all 61—to request their backing for RateGate, which is my electorate's campaign to fix the scandalous disparity between rural-regional and metropolitan rates. This disparity sees ratepayers in my electorate paying up to six times the rates of a ratepayer in Melbourne for a property of the same value. Often councils are blamed for this disparity, but this is unreasonable because the source of the problem is not managerial but structural, and those structures are determined by state and federal governments. My letter invites regional MPs to unite across party lines and lobby for change for the benefit of rural and regional ratepayers, for whom rates are a major cost-of-living issue. I would encourage each of the 61 recipients to read the letter carefully and consider the actions that I have proposed. Addressing this disparity is a complex task, but it is entirely achievable with the right political will, and it is about time we stopped paying mere lip-service to this at election time, took it out of the too-hard basket and did something meaningful. Regional rate reform matters to farmers and it matters to ratepayers, and therefore it should matter to all of us as rural and regional MPs, regardless of our party or our colour. I invite and encourage all regional Victorian MPs to engage with me on this issue and as a first step to help lobby the federal coalition government and Labor opposition ahead of the federal election.

SUNBURY ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (09:54): Last Thursday I was absolutely delighted to join members of my local community at a meeting of the Sunbury Residents Association. I was particularly excited to share with attendees updates on the vast array of local projects, literally representing tens of millions of dollars of investment in my local community—projects like the removal of the Sunbury level crossing, investment in the Sunbury Community Hospital, upgrades at Boardman, Langama and Clarke ovals as well as massive local school projects at Sunbury West and Goonawarra primary schools. Questions came thick and fast, but I was particularly keen to point out that this government, the Andrews Labor government, continues to invest in my community, and I take this opportunity to call on the federal coalition government to match this enthusiasm, to find Sunbury on the map and to start to fund some key local projects for my growing community. I can think of one in particular, and that is the Bulla bypass, which is in detailed planning by this government. I again renew my call for the federal government to also put some money towards this terrific project. I am sure members of the residents association would agree with this.

I was also delighted to be able to share plans for the upgrade of Sunbury Road—another critical local project for my community. Many local residents have spoken to me about the importance of this project. Only Labor gets it done in my community.

SOMERS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (09:55): Premier, when you were first elected you promised Victoria that you would govern for all Victorians. What happened? My community is a part of Victoria, but you do not seem to get that. Ever since you were first elected and made that promise you have systematically ignored my community, and it is time that you started keeping your promises and providing the resources that the Hastings electorate needs to overcome your mismanagement, your lockdowns and your broken promises.

Last Friday the Victorian Liberal leader, the member for Bulleen, and the Liberal candidate for Hastings, Briony Hutton, announced a Liberal-Nationals Victorian government would provide \$3.2 million to upgrade Somers Primary School as part of our plan to recover and rebuild part of the promises that this current Premier should have been satisfying. Somers is now home to many young families, with more moving into the community as permanent residents since the ongoing lockdown restrictions in Melbourne. The existing administration building is a 20-year-old portable that no longer meets the needs of the school. Somers Primary School has been constantly overlooked by Labor, and

only a Liberal-Nationals government will deliver the upgrades it needs and deserves. There are so many broken promises that this Labor government have left in limbo.

BERNARD 'BERNIE' D'ARCY, OAM

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (09:57): On Friday I joined a large gathering of family and friends to celebrate the life of Bernie D'arcy, OAM. Bernie was a stalwart of the Geelong labour movement. He joined the ALP in 1953. He was the secretary of Geelong Trades Hall for 15 years and held many other positions along with his work in the community. I had the great privilege to learn so much from Bernie. He knew the importance of good Labor policy and how it changes lives and workers rights. To his wife, Jean, and children, Susan, Christine, Craig, Barbara and Lynette, Bernie will be remembered for the great legacy he has left in the Geelong labour movement and the broader Geelong community. Vale, Comrade Bernie D'arcy.

STILL HERE, NOW

Ms COUZENS: On Friday evening I had the privilege to speak at the *Still Here, Now* exhibition at Geelong's Platform Arts. The exhibition brings together the Wadawurrung and Geelong communities to a creative celebration of Wadawurrung country, people and history. *Still Here, Now* is curated by young emerging First Nations artists Tarryn Love and Jahkarli Romanis. The exhibition showcases a diversity of First Nations contemporary practices, breaking down stereotypes of Indigenous art.

First Nations exhibitions and sharing the culture cannot be occasional events. Geelong must continue to provide cultural spaces and events in support of the Wadawurrung gatherings. Geelong is now embracing Aboriginal art and culture within infrastructure projects such as the Geelong Arts Centre and the Royal Geelong Yacht Club— (*Time expired*)

HIGHTON TREE REMOVAL

Mr CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (09:59): Last weekend I was in the beautiful suburb of Highton talking to residents about what is most important to them and their community. Overwhelmingly residents were concerned about the increasing removal of Highton's mature trees to make way for multi-unit developments, especially when such clearing is unnecessary for the development to proceed. Highton is well known for its many mature trees and its majestic tree canopy that has stood proud for decades in many parks and gardens throughout Highton. This greenery is a part of the heritage, character and amenity of this beautiful suburb—a suburb that I called home for many years. Now more than ever trees provide a vital role in protecting us against the worst aspects of climate change by helping keep our suburbs cool.

Trees are a vital part of the green infrastructure that makes our communities livable, and the City of Greater Geelong is not providing adequate protection for these trees under its planning scheme. Highton residents have watched in horror as the City of Greater Geelong has allowed more and more trees to be cut down and removed from their landscape. Planting new trees is not adequate as it takes many years for saplings to grow and mature and provide a mature tree canopy for this suburb. I am deeply concerned about this issue. (*Time expired*)

BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE REVITALISATION

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (10:00): Restoring trust in the political system requires needs-based funding and performance-based members of Parliament. I highlight my commitment to these public interest causes to mark the 11th anniversary of my inaugural speech on defining how to help more people deny that miser fate. Breaking the cycle of disadvantage requires creative solutions and collaboration. My call is for Hume City Council to immediately announce the \$40 million proposals for the town centre so I can leverage further investments as chair of the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board 4.0. Broadmeadows is a priority and its hard-won city deal is worth with hundreds of millions of dollars for Melbourne's north-west. New social and affordable housing has been secured. The health

and community centre of excellence is being built. The Field of Dreams project will link local youth to sporting team Melbourne Storm. Proposing big-picture ideas has proved successful. Advocacy has ranged from expanding CSL's manufacturing in Broadmeadows to deliver independent supply chains and national sovereignty, now featuring vaccines, to the Cancer Moonshot partnership with the White House.

The community expects preselection and promotion of elected representatives to be based on experience, performance and credibility. This is when the Labor Party is at its best. This is the cause that it should pursue. This is when it delivers the best results in the community interest and in the national interest. I joined a cause, not a gang, and have coordinated three tiers of government, business and civil society to deliver results where they are needed most, and this is what I am committed to for every day that I am still serving the people of Broadmeadows and the Parliament of Victoria.

MEN'S SHEDS

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:02): I am very pleased to announce that the Victorian men's shed parliamentary friendship group has been formally established, and I am proud to be co-convenor of the group together with the member for Brunswick. Sadly, the Liberal-National parties have declined to participate and boycotted attendance at the inaugural meeting for reasons unknown. As with all parliamentary friendship groups, the men's shed group is apolitical and open to all members of Parliament. It is hoped that members of the Liberal-National parties will have a change of heart at some time and join the group. I look forward to hosting the men's shed Victorian committee at Parliament soon to discuss events, activities and ideas to further promote men's sheds and the fantastic work they do.

THE CROSSING

Ms HALFPENNY: I rise in support of the work of the Victorian trade union movement to establish Victoria's first worker-led drug and alcohol rehabilitation outpatient outreach service called The Crossing. Unions are well recognised for organising to achieve better wages, conditions and health and safety on the job, but unions are less known for the critical work they do to support members facing crises in life and looking out for their welfare. Too often unions and employers find it difficult to navigate an overwhelmed system to provide support for workers with addiction and mental ill health, watching helplessly as their lives spin out of control and they ultimately lose their jobs. But unions are not used to standing on the sidelines and helplessly watching on—they act and organise. The Crossing will enable unions, employers and service providers to come together to provide critical onsite education, outreach support and harm reduction training for health and safety reps, delegates and employers. There are plans to build a rehabilitation facility to refer workers and to provide support for families. This project is about providing mentally healthy workplaces with early intervention and innovation, a project that fits exactly with our government's royal commission— (*Time expired*)

SAN REMO CHANNEL CHALLENGE

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (10:03): Glorious day, crystal-clear water—over 500 competitors turned out for the 36th San Remo Channel Challenge, a 550-metre swim to the island and 2-kilometre run back. The community at large cheered with enthusiasm at the jetty across the channel and lined the bridges as you ran, walked and hobbled past, with more at the finish all egging you on encouragingly with high fives, 'Go, girl', 'Go, you', 'Just keep going'. Local businesses were delighted seeing so much activity. The band at the Sanny rocked—it even played *April Sun in Cuba* in full. The organisers breathed a sigh of relief; their hard work and preparation delivered an event that did not miss a beat. We had a bit of a stellar line-up with elite Oz triathletes and Olympians setting a ridiculous pace, but the day was about having fun and giving it a go no matter your level. Big yay to the 100 volunteers on the water, in the race centre, in the transition area and at the finish, 70 of them Woolamai Beach Surf Life Saving Club members—all proceeds going to the club to support this vital service. Special mention to Brian Dallinger, the only competitor now to have completed all 36 challenges; guest starter John Thomson, legendary club past president and life member; and Graeme Burgan for his expertise

in calling the slack tide. A big thankyou also to Ron, Melina, Graeme, Riley, Sully, Max, Geoff, Rob, club president Mark, our SES crew, sponsors and all involved. This was truly a reconnecting-the-community event—totally recommend putting it on your bucket list.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr PAKULA (Keysborough—Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Trade, Minister for Business Precincts, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Racing) (10:05): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with the notice of motion today and ask that it remain on the notice paper.

Bills

ALPINE RESORTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms D'AMBROSIO:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (10:06): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I do so wearing two hats—actually three: firstly as the relevant Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change; as the Shadow Minister for Tourism, which I think has a bit of an overlap here; but equally I have three of the mountains that are impacted here, Mount Buller, Mount Stirling and Lake Mountain, in my electorate. This is a sector that I know very well. Having been a skier in the past when my knees were perhaps a little bit more sturdy, it was something that I enjoyed greatly. People have headed to the mountains, to the High Country—it is easy to say for decades, but it has actually been for longer periods than that, because Mount Hotham actually acknowledged that the Aboriginal people gathered in large numbers in the High Country, particularly in the spring and the summer months, and that connection with that area still remains. It was the Taungurung and the Gunnai/Kurnai that went there. I imagine it might have been a tad chilly and even their possum skin coats might not have kept them warm and free from frostbite in those very chilly winter times. That was significant then, and it remains significant, that relationship.

The alpine resorts are very important to many economies—local economies and also the Victorian economy. They actually contribute \$1.1 billion to the economy each year, attracting 1 million visitors and sustaining around 10 000 jobs, so it is quite a significant sector. In fact the Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council industry update in December 2019 records that the resorts received a total of 933 098 visits over 1.6 million visitor days. So we know that people stay for a number of days when they head to the alpine resorts. Visitation in 2019 was slightly down on 2018, and I have not seen the figures for 2020 or 2021, but they had very choppy snow seasons. Like many, I want to see the mountains thrive. Their long-term sustainability is important, and when I look at the local economies that these mountains support I know personally how many jobs rely on and are created through this industry—and year round. I see these mountains already looking at ways—they probably have been for the last decade—they can adapt to climate change, and they have made a number of advancements in that direction.

It is not always easy up on the mountains, because you never know what sort of season you are going to get. It is great if there is snow for opening weekend, but that is no good if it melts and is all gone for school holidays, when they get a lot of visitation. Weekends are very heavy. You can have a variety of snowfalls—light, heavy. You can have great snowfalls and the rain can wash it out. You can have blizzards and all sorts of things, and the timing really makes a difference. The fact that they can use snow-making machines now has been a real boost to the mountains because it means that they can guarantee snow on opening weekend. The temperature can be I think about 14 degrees and the snow cover can still remain, and they can still keep churning it out and groom a lot of the runs. So that means

that during the earlier times and the later times they can actually boost the number of runs that are available and extend the season, and for them that makes a huge difference to the economy.

I want to thank the minister's office for arranging the briefings. The minister's office have always been helpful and responsive, and I thank Emily for her work. I also want to acknowledge the department staff and their knowledge and experience, which I also appreciate. Ian Campbell-Fraser and Grant Watkinson were the ones who met with me and walked me through this. I know that Ian had a lot of engagement with the stakeholders during the development of this bill, and people really appreciated his efforts and his knowledge.

The purpose of the bill is to establish Alpine Resorts Victoria (ARV). It is another entity, and it is going to be responsible now for managing the six alpine resorts. These resorts are Falls Creek; Mount Hotham; Mount Buller; Mount Stirling, which is side by side with Mount Buller; Lake Mountain; and Mount Baw Baw. At the same time as it creates Alpine Resorts Victoria it is going to abolish the four existing resort management boards as well as the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council, the ARCC. Despite there being six mountains, there are only four management boards, because we have Buller and Stirling as one and we have Mount Baw Baw and Lake Mountain under the Southern Alpine Resort Management Board.

As you would expect, the bill makes related amendments to a number of other bills—the Emergency Management Act 2013, the Forests Act 1958 and the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021, which has only just gone through the Parliament—in its efforts to address the establishment of the new entity.

I guess the question first of all needs to be asked: why are we making these changes? Why is the government changing the way in which the boards are managed? There are a couple of reasons—mostly strengthening and modernising, which are happening on the way, and looking for efficiency of operations and financial sustainability for the long term. It is certainly no secret that given the different factors at play, different mountains have different challenges and struggles. I look at some of the smaller ones, Baw Baw and Lake Mountain. They do not have resorts—there might be one lodge I think at Baw Baw—but you do not go and stay on those mountains, you stay nearby, whereas at Buller, Hotham, Falls and Stirling you have those lodges, you have apartments. You have quite extensive villages at those mountains, so financial sustainability for the long term is particularly important.

I want to go over some of the history of the management of the resorts over time, because it has changed quite a lot. I will start in 1984 with the establishment of the Alpine Resorts Commission (ARC). At that time all of the mountains had different management arrangements. Forests Commission Victoria was responsible at Buller and the State Electricity Commission of Victoria at Falls Creek, because they had the Kiewa there and they had quite an extensive program there with the power, and actually the SEC built the first lodge, in 1948, at Falls and a lift in 1951. We do not ever stop to think of the history of these sorts of things. The lands commission was responsible at Hotham.

I also find interesting that when the ARC was formed Mount Donna Buang and Mount Torbreck, both of which are in my electorate, were also part of the ARC, but something has happened. I am not quite sure how come they have dropped off over the years. I do not think Donna Buang gets the love and attention that it really deserves. It is just out of Warburton. It does not get as much snow, but when it does get snow it is really busy, and the facilities there have really dropped.

The charter of the ARC in 1984 quite interestingly is not terribly dissimilar to what is being put forward now for Alpine Resorts Victoria. I am led to believe that this went on okay for quite some time, but by 1997, some 15 years later, this was—I am quoting from a stakeholder—'a bit of a bloated, fat bureaucracy'. There were loads of staff and none of them were connected with the mountains, so the mountains were feeling very disenfranchised. In 1997 things started to happen, started to change, and the Kennett government were moving here. In 1998 the ARC ceased operation. It moved from that one central bureaucracy, gave the power to the resorts and, as you could imagine with the Kennett

government, encouraged competition between the resorts. This was very much looking at improving service levels and reducing costs.

Again, that went on quite well for a period of time and then it was altered again. It was succeeded by the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council, which had five different resort management boards, and again Buller and Stirling were under the one management board. Again, that worked well for a period of time. You know, when the resorts had their own powers, so to speak—their own management boards—that actually was when they did a lot of the development with lifts and chalets and opening new runs.

Things moved on a little bit. I think it would be fair to say that some of the stakeholders on the mountains did not always think they had the greatest voice, so Minister Smith, the then environment minister in the Baillieu-Napthine governments, created the Alpine Resorts Industry Advisory Group, which is the industry association voice on the mountain. ARIAG have continued to feed into the ARCC. Since that time there has been a little bit of uncertainty within the mountains about what exactly it is going to look like. What did their future look like for them? There were lots of stories, lots of rumours. As I said, the then minister at the time in 2014 had a study done, which actually was pushing towards this model. You have got to ask now: here we are in 2022 and this was sitting on the table pretty well in 2014—and I am sure that he will speak to that a bit later.

Whilst there was a little bit of argy-bargy about how they were going to manage these boards, we saw in 2015 that they merged the boards of Baw Baw and Lake Mountain. I know there was a lot of uncertainty here for Lake Mountain about how that would look and the representation from Lake Mountain and the representation from Baw Baw, because some board members would know one and not the other. At the time there was talk that perhaps they would do a southern and do a northern and have the four mountains in the north all under one umbrella. That did not happen. But what did happen in November 2017, effective in March 2018, was they changed the board structure of the RMBs, the resort management boards, to have four directors who were common to each of the RMBs. So you had three from each mountain but you had four who were common, who moved.

Within the stakeholders people were certainly worried that if there was something that was contentious, those four would vote as a bloc for the mountains rather than just for their mountain, and that went on. Here we are not so far down the track, and we have another change. I think it is fair to say—and I have spoken to many, many stakeholders; I know many of those stakeholders personally—that they think now that once this gets bedded down it will be here for a good 15 or 20 years, like the previous changes. They will be good as they are for the time. They will iron out things, get it all moving and settle down, and then there will be little things that need tweaking or changing maybe 15, 20 years down the track.

As I move into the details of the bill, in many respects the bill actually does not change the intent of the alpine resorts legislation at all, and a lot of it largely mirrors what is already in existence. It establishes ARV and replaces the RMBs—it replaces the names of the mountains—and it replaces the ARCC as well, the coordinating council. It replaces all of those but leaves a lot of things quite similar, so a lot of what they do and what the intent is remains unchanged. However, there are a number of inclusions, and I will talk about these inclusions. One of them is new section 6A, which is about the alpine resorts principles. They are in legislation, so they are in black and white. It is clear what those principles are. Within those there is recognition and incorporation of the traditional owners. There is a focus on climate change for the destinations to be year round, and also that the unique characteristics of each alpine resort have to be considered. This is really important, because Baw Baw is very different from Mount Buller. Mount Buller and Mount Stirling are side by side, but they have differences. Stirling is your cross-country mecca. Craig and Barb Jones have run lessons and adventures and things from there for, gosh, as long as I can remember and have put everything into Stirling. Again, it is quite different from Falls and Hotham. Recognising the unique characteristics of each resort is important because I know that within each mountain they think, ‘Well, what about us? We don’t fit. One size

does not fit all', and I think that this is the option that is put there so the government says, 'We do recognise'—and I recognise—'that one size does not fit all'.

Another thing I will talk a little bit more about is the stakeholder consultative committees that are being set up at each resort and the change to the skills-based board structure, and I think things have been moving to that a little bit. On the way the bill attempts to modernise the legislation and the governance model. Basically we are looking at a single authority to improve the coordination, cost efficiencies and the overarching strategic leadership to the sector. There are some 200-plus staff, plus a whopping load of seasonal cohorts, and that will also transfer to the entity. The assets will transfer. It is actually quite interesting to look at the assets because the land is Crown land but the assets on that Crown land are mostly privately owned—85 per cent of the assets across all of the mountains are in private ownership. A couple of things are missing from this legislation, but one of the key things is that recognition of the involvement of the private sector.

I am told that it is very difficult to invest in the mountains. Because it is not your own land, because it is Crown land, the banks require a 50 per cent deposit, so already you are behind the eight ball in trying to be engaged and involved. It is so important that we have recognition of the role that the private lodges, the hotels, the restaurants, the ski hires, the supermarkets and the chemists play, because without those private investors, the private players, we do not have a sector, winter or summer.

I want to touch on the principles in new section 6A that is being inserted. The minister has seven principles that have been put here, and I just want to touch on those. I am told that they are all equally weighted, which is important. One is:

protecting the unique environmental, social, cultural and economic characteristics of each ... resort ...

that is, that uniqueness that I mentioned before. Also:

planning for and managing all alpine resorts in a co-ordinated manner that adapts to and responds to the impacts and risks of climate change ...

I mentioned that before. Certainly with climate change there is talk of reduced snow levels. The fact is they can make snow, and these machines churn it out incredibly fast—to see them in operation and how they can add to or build runs. In fact we have seen the last couple of Winter Olympics being run on man-made snow. It is really quite extraordinary to look at what they can do. A lot of the mountains say, 'Look, this is one of the things we are doing to adapt to climate change. If there is going to be less snow, we can make it'. I know at Mount Buller now they have secured their water source to help them do that. It was also to help the town up on Buller have the water they require.

The third principle relates to the:

... impact of the use of the ... resorts on natural and cultural features and the ecology of the alpine resorts ...

And this is where the government is bringing the traditional custodians into the act:

respecting, protecting and promoting ... self-determination, cultural values, practices, heritage and knowledge in the ... resorts ...

Another principle is:

partnering with traditional owners in policy development, planning, and decision-making ...

There is the protection and enhancement of the amenity, access and use of each alpine resort for 'future generations', so not just now but also for the future, and:

promoting investment in a diverse range of tourism and recreation experiences, for all seasons ...

Should there be time I will talk about the diversity into the green season that a lot of the mountains have done.

There are a couple of concerns that have been raised with me—quite a lot actually—about the funding model and the operating model. The funding and the operating models I think, as I have said, do not

really belong in the legislation, but they are concerns and are things—with regard to the implementation, the rollout of ARV—that the government needs to be on top of. There is a lot of concern that big mountains will be propping up the smaller mountains. The smaller mountains think, ‘Well, are we going to get more money as a result of this? What does it look like? We know what we need to do to make the visitation better, the experience better, the winter season longer, the summer season more enhanced. We know what to do, but it requires investment’, and they are not sure what that looks like. As to that operations model, the stakeholders say to me, ‘We want to know how it’s going to work’. That will be bedded down, and I am sure that there will be things that need to be tweaked and it might not be quite right in the first instance.

One of the other concerns that I have is about the board composition. This is quite interesting. On moving to a skills-based board—which is certainly what is modern, and you need to be doing and making sure of that—it talks about the skills, but it actually does not ever say that any of these board members must live locally. It could be that they ski at Buller, they ski at Falls, but they all live in Melbourne. It is quite possible that that could be the case. So there is a little bit of edginess about that. But one of the things that alarmed me somewhat is the subsection which says:

... Alpine Resorts Victoria has a Board of directors that consists of not fewer than 3 ...

Three! I cannot imagine trying to get a quorum and establishing what is a quorum with three. I really think that should have been at least five and not more than nine. I am fine with that. In the bill briefing there were a lot of words about consistencies across agencies, and when I looked at the number of board members on many different government agencies there were typically around seven or nine. I would have thought that having the number in the legislation go down to three was possibly not the right number.

There are so many towns that are so heavily reliant on the mountains. At Mount Hotham, Bright is close by, and it really has a lot of focus on and a lot of investment in the mountain. At Falls Creek, it is Mount Beauty—a smaller town than Bright. At Mount Buller we have got Merrijig, which relies on it very heavily and also relies on a lot of great horseriding activities in the summer months. And Mansfield—I know a lot of people in Mansfield will work on the mountain in winter and they might have an interest over summer, and they will work in the town over the summer. Lake Mountain has Marysville as the place, and Marysville is reliant on good conditions at Lake Mountain.

Now, I consulted absolutely widely on this bill. I want to just read through some of the feedback. The councils who are close by want to make sure that they are not left out, because as I said, there are so many towns in their municipalities that are reliant on a successful snow season typically and as the green season picks up. They are very concerned about how the priorities for resource allocation to individual resorts will be determined—the funding model. They want assurance that the big players are not going to get it all or are not going to try and force a model that works for them but may not work for the smaller ones—the one size fits all that I mentioned before.

There were concerns about whether this adds another layer of bureaucracy. Though, when you are removing four resort managements boards and the ARCC and creating this, with the jobs going over—except the little bit about executive level; that is not quite happening—I do not think that is something that they need to be concerned about. The transition was interesting. I am pleased to see that the transition to this is not going to be made mid ski season, it is actually going to be made after that. I think that will let everybody know what is coming, have a good season, think about it and then transition to the new season after that. The timing is something that has been raised as important.

Private sector investment I mentioned earlier. Also I mentioned earlier about whether the small resorts will receive appropriate funding, because I do know that at Lake Mountain it has been very difficult for them. At the higher mountains—at Falls, Hotham and Buller—the biggest concerns, again, are about the funding and operating model, and I have covered off on those. They have said they worry when the people who are doing the consulting do not have knowledge of the mountain as it is. With

the concerns of a lot of the stakeholders, one of the areas that has been incorporated, to I think placate them to some degree, is the establishment of a stakeholder consultative committee:

Alpine Resorts Victoria must appoint a stakeholder consultative committee for each alpine resort ...

That is six of them. That should give the stakeholders a voice, so they are heard. Having a voice is one thing, being heard and listened to is another. But, again, all resorts are unique. That is mentioned in the principles, and here we have got the stakeholder committees which will represent passionately each of those mountains and will make sure they are heard. They are not backward in coming forward by any means. I note that the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events is at the table and that he was at Falls Creek very recently and met with the CEOs. He would understand that these guys probably are not at all backward in coming forward and the stakeholders have very firm views.

I want to end on some of the stories. We have had a long history not just through the First Nations people's involvement with the mountains but also once we started to use them and look at them as ski resorts. At Mount Buller they have got a website which talks about the legends and personalities, because there are a lot of people there who have been there for donkeys. One of the ones that I will mention, Bob Fleming, is coming up for 50 years. If you have skied Buller at Koflers, you will know Koflers, and 50 years on the mountain is a fairly extraordinary time.

Things have changed significantly. Hans Grimus came in the late 1960s, and what a personality Hans was. He died in 2018, but he was there in the late 1960s and got involved at Hotel Pension Grimus. His family—Lotte, the boys, Anton—are still heavily involved on the mountain. Hans was right up until his death. He did a lot of work shaping the mountain, and some of the stories about how he literally shaped the mountain are pretty amusing and would never happen these days—but they had a little bit more freedom in those days.

John Perks runs the Arlberg Hotel; he is coming up for his 43rd winter. John was referred to as 'the apprentice' by Bob Fleming and Hans Grimus, and John said to me that those early days were great fun. It was not as professional as it is nowadays. They had a lot of fun building, getting involved with the lifts and the ski runs and creating Mount Buller as it is, and he said, 'But you know what? Now it is very hard work'. He said that after two years of lockdowns. The ski fields were operating and they had to close the lifts at 1 o'clock and everybody was still there. I think people got creative doing some outdoor exercise—the lifts were closed but they tried to do a little bit of cross-country and snowboarding down the mountain and walking up a little bit.

We have George Aivatoglou at George's Ski Hire. He, at 24 years of age, came up in 1962, and Rob and his wife, Oni, are now still actively involved. These people have just put so much of their lives into these mountains, and this is what I have said—85 per cent of the resorts, the assets, are owned privately. These guys have put their money where their mouths are. They have invested heavily. They have created what we have and what we know to be a wonderful resort.

Laurie Blampied is on his way out. He has been at Mount Buller Ski Lifts since 1995, and he is now working in a part-time capacity. He has moved off the mountain, but he has been an institution there. These people know so much about the mountains. There are Mark Woodsford—I want to give Woody a mention too because every year, good on him, he organises a prawn dinner up at Buller, and it is the place to be at the end of the snow season. There is Barb and Craig Jones over at Mount Stirling. I have watched the highs and the lows for some of these people; they talk about how difficult it was during the lockdowns.

So all in all with this alpine resorts legislation I think most of the stakeholders are comfortable. They have concerns about the funding models and the operating models, and I urge the government to listen to them. I urge them to establish the stakeholder committees sooner rather than later and to make sure that there is a good representation of stakeholders on those committees and it is not just three people. You know, you can have a good working committee with a similar size to a board—maybe with nine members—and you could co-opt people onto that, whether you are in the ski lift business, whether

you are running the supermarket. You know, you have got the ski patrol up there—and they do a fabulous job, the ski patrol. They work out how to get people off the mountain. We have the police involved on the mountains as well. They have to get involved when people disappear—sometimes they get a little bit lost at night. We are not opposing this legislation.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (10:36): It is with great pleasure that I join the debate on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I think it is appropriate, particularly given we honoured the memory of the former member for Benalla, Denise Allen, this week. Her family were here, and a number of us did members statements. I was cut off because we only have 90 seconds, but I did want to just reiterate Denise's passion for the alpine resorts. At that time in the Benalla electorate there was Mount Hotham, Mount Buller and Lake Mountain and Falls Creek was just outside, so that electorate then covered almost every resort except for Mount Baw Baw. She really had an enormous passion for representing those resorts, and even though she had a physical disability herself she was a great voice for the communities that make their living from those resorts. I really want to thank her, because it was the opportunity that I had in working to help her get elected when volunteering on that campaign that reintroduced me and my children to the pleasures of alpine life. In the 20 years since we have only missed the last two seasons, given we have had the lockdowns. So I really did want to thank Denise for that. We have had a great deal of pleasure since then.

I have an absolute interest and abiding passion for these resorts, what they are and what they can be. Most Victorians and most Australians do not, I think, understand that in the Snowy Mountains—that is, our Snowy Mountains and New South Wales's as well—even though most of the visitation is in that small window of the ski season, they actually have more visitors every year than the Great Barrier Reef. This is an enormous asset to Victoria and to New South Wales. It is a billion-dollar industry to Victoria, and I know the Minister for Tourism and Major Events at the table understands that. He was just at Falls Creek last weekend, and I know that the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change was at Buller recently. I have the former tourism minister, the member for Lara, just sitting here to my right, and I know in the time that he was the minister for tourism that he just loved visiting our great resorts.

Before I go into the details of the bill I just want to make reference to our great medallists and the great results that Australia had in the Winter Olympics. We do not have very much alpine snow cover in our country, and we are desperately trying to hang onto it. It is one of the reasons I fight so hard for climate mitigation, and I just hope that the federal government listens, because we want to keep skiing. You know, we finished 18th in the medal tally, which is just amazing—ahead of Great Britain. We know they have a whole lot of colder weather. I just wanted to pay tribute to Jakara Anthony. If you saw her skiing those moguls—I mean, my knees felt really sore when I saw that. I like a few moguls but not to that level. She got gold in women's freestyle skiing moguls. For Jaelyn Narracott in the skeleton—I have always been fascinated by the luge and the skeleton, going down headfirst like that—that was just remarkable to get silver. There is Scotty James in the men's snowboard half-pipe and Tess Coady in the women's snowboard slopestyle, and I particularly want to give a shout-out to Greta Small from Porepunkah, a tiny little town in Victoria. She did not start skiing until her late teens, like my kids really, and she is placing at a high level and is just such a gorgeous, gorgeous young woman. Lydia Lassila was an amazing commentator I think, and Buller have named a lift after her quite rightly.

When I entered this Parliament I entered with the great Kirstie Marshall, the former member for Forest Hill, and really when we came in in 2002 the ski faction was born. Many of us just enjoyed great times up there. The late Lynne Kosky was an amazing skier and supporter of these resorts along with Denise Allen. Maxine Morand is a former board member and was a great ski champion of the resorts, and it is the same with former Deputy Premier John Thwaites in downhill and cross-country. I have always been too lazy to do cross-country; I like more of an adrenaline rush. But anyway, there have been many of us that just love these resorts.

With the last two years of COVID it has just been so sad. Ski resorts all over the world have had the same issue. But I think the reform that the government is putting before the house is really a model

that is going to assist our resorts to go forward into the future and to realise that dream that we have to use year-round our beautiful High Country. We see particularly with our more newly arrived migrants, those from South Asia in particular are not crazy like Australians, who just hug the coast in summer. They understand with the cooler temperatures in summer that the High Country is actually a good place to go on holiday. So that is why as a government we have invested strongly through our regional tourism fund to ensure that we can capitalise on this.

The member for Eildon free-ranged a lot about the resorts in her electorate and nearby, but I think one of the things she missed was really the volunteers that have built resorts over the years—they are not necessarily privately owned but they are on leases—that is, the ski lodges. They really are the heart particularly of Mount Hotham, and I know in my electorate particularly in the north of Melbourne so many tradies just got together in the 1960s and 70s and built those lodges. They really are a unique part of our resorts, together with the other more well-known families and of course the ski lift companies that are so important.

I have met and consulted with stakeholders in relation to this bill, and I want to commend the department for doing the same thing. I think that there really is overall support and the need for change. I did want to congratulate Belinda Trembath, who is a good mate of mine. She is moving after many, many years. She is with Vail Resorts now and has been with that company in various iterations, but she has actually now been promoted to move from looking after the Victorian resorts of Hotham and Falls Creek to also take in Perisher, and she will be moving to Perisher. With people like Belinda that are so well known and passionate about the Victorian mountains now moving to Perisher, together with this change to our structures and having one resort management board without job losses and then having our cross-border commissioner in Victoria and with New South Wales, I see that maybe we can have even better marketing, as I started with in my presentation, across the Snowy Mountains and really work together and improve and grow our resorts more beyond the billion dollars.

I did want to make reference to our disabled winter athletes, and I declare my interest: I am a member of Disabled Wintersport Australia, and I volunteer as a disability guide, assisting people to use the mountain whether they are vision impaired, people in wheelchairs or kids with cerebral palsy. It is just a thing that I absolutely love doing. I know that the DWA wants to recruit the new Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, the member for Ivanhoe, because it is a volunteer organisation, volunteer led. They really look forward to getting him trained up as a disability guide.

But we have a lot of jobs on the mountain. We have many people that volunteer, whether it is through ski patrol or fire brigades, on the mountains. People have an absolute passion for these mountains. The consultative committees that are enshrined in this legislation will be able to gather the great passion and the interests that people have in the mountains, whether it is downhill, whether it is cross-country, whether it is biathlon. There is a great shooting range at Hotham, so people are able to do that. It is the most amazing sport—having your body completely slow when shooting and then bursting your heart while you are cross-country skiing. I encourage you to look at it. There is a lot of it throughout Europe, but we do it here in Australia.

We do our resorts very well in Victoria, and I am sure that this new structure will mean we can do even better in this post-COVID environment and in the climate change world. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:46): I am delighted to rise to make a contribution on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. As we know, this bill before the house is intended to establish Alpine Resorts Victoria as the entity responsible for managing Victoria's six alpine resorts, being Falls Creek, Mount Hotham, Mount Buller, Mount Stirling, Lake Mountain and Mount Baw Baw. In the wonderful Ovens Valley electorate we already are home to the Mount Hotham resort, and with the boundary changes happening later this year the resort of Falls Creek will also fall into the Ovens Valley electorate. I thank the member for Benambra for his great work in that region over many

years, and I look forward to being able to take that over that mantle and continue his good work in Mount Beauty and up through Falls Creek.

It also begs the question why this government for Melbourne continues to make decisions from Melbourne that are simply not in tune with regional expectations or their needs or their wants. Not once had the government consulted with me regarding the changes in and the implications of this bill until the bill briefing, which is basically after the horse has bolted and the legislation is making its final landing preparations. This is why the government is not respected beyond the tram tracks of Melbourne, because they just do not consult with key stakeholders in our regions.

The bill abolishes the four existing resort management boards—Falls, Hotham, Buller and Stirling, and Southern—as well as the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council, at which time all the assets and the liabilities will be transferred to the secretary. The bill also makes amendments to the Emergency Management Act 2013, the Forests Act 1958 and the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 to address the establishment of the new entity. Although the bill does not change the intent of these acts, as it largely mirrors the existing legislation, adopts Alpine Resorts Victoria and replaces references to the existing management structures, it does take the decision-making power away from the local boards—that is a concern we have, and you have heard the member for Eildon speak about those concerns—who are the key stakeholders who understand each resort intimately, and hand it to a centralised Melbourne-based board which invariably will be stacked by Andrews government appointees. We have seen that this week with the CEO of V/Line. He is a failed Labor candidate and ended up becoming the CEO of V/Line. That is where we get our concerns from. It is this type of behaviour that we have come to expect, and another four years of this will certainly ruin Victoria's reputation and finances for decades.

But the bill has got a couple of inclusions. Some are a bit of a smokescreen to try and demonstrate significant changes, including recognition and incorporation of traditional owners; a focus on climate change, with mountains to be year-round destinations; the unique characteristics of each alpine resort must be considered; the appointment of stakeholder consultative committees at each resort; and of course a skills-based board. In a skills-based board appointed by the Andrews government I suspect one of the skills you would need to get a guernsey on that skills base is to be a Labor Party operative. Anyway, the establishment of the single authority is aimed at improving coordination, cost efficiencies and the overarching strategic leadership of the sector, but we all know, on both sides of this chamber, that cost efficiencies is not a term that goes well with this government. We are told that all existing staff—around about 200 permanent staff—will transfer to the single entity. I cannot say we did not see it coming. In December 2015 the boards of Baw Baw and Lake Mountain were merged, and that became effective in March 2018. Now, the boards were altered to include four board members common across each mountain, so the resort boards could then start to feel what was happening and that somebody else was starting to take control of the mountains. As I say, we could see that coming from afar.

Victoria's alpine resorts contribute \$1.1 billion to the economy each year, attracting more than 1 million visitors and sustaining around about 10 000 jobs when the season is on, which is why we have still got many concerns about the new and improved model by the government for Melbourne. We have still got questions and concerns around the lack of clarity around the resort funding model, concerns about how the larger resorts may be required to prop up the smaller resorts and the anticipated savings through this process. It usually means a lack of state funding and a higher tax threshold for alpine users will be imposed somewhere along the line. Even the department could not quantify the funding model and stated it was unlikely to be realised for a number of years. Most importantly there is no clarity to us—although I am sure the government is clear—around the lack of acknowledgement of private enterprise and its critical role in the investment in and operations of the alpine resorts. As the member for Eildon said, a very high percentage of those who own real estate in the alpine resorts are private investors. Private investment is the key. They are fairly high risk investments in that they run on a shoestring budget and they need to roll with what Mother Nature presents to them each year,

whether it is a great snow season—it varies from a great snow season to a very poor snow season—bushfires, rain or wind-affected conditions. They are all the risks that they take in privately investing in our alpine regions. So the lack of a consultation with the private sector again demonstrates the attitude of the government—that it knows it all.

We have also got some concerns around the timing, the commencement and the board composition. Now, it may very well be that all board members could live in Melbourne and just have an association with the mountain, or not even an association with the mountain. The minimum number of board members is three. Again, it is hardly good governance in my eyes. I asked a question at the briefing about the remuneration of board members. It is yet to be determined, so time will tell.

Local councils, like the Alpine shire, who rely heavily on the mountains are often lumbered with the associated costs and infrastructure required to support the surrounding regions, and I am concerned that Alpine Resorts Victoria will not be obliged to consult with them into the future. They may, but they will not be obliged to. A typical example of this is where vehicles travel along the Great Alpine Road. If you want to travel from Bright to Bairnsdale, for example, you can pass through Hotham for no cost; you do not have to pay a fee. We could do with some changes, and we have certainly discussed some changes. If somebody stops for lunch or a coffee or something at Mount Hotham, they then have to pay the resort management fee for staying on the mountain, which is quite impractical because sometimes it might be just poor weather that has held them up or slowed them down. If the consultation continues, well, then we can resolve a few of those issues. As was mentioned by our lead speaker, the member for Eildon, we are not opposing the bill, but as always we expect to be back here soon making amendments to tidy up the mess that sometimes gets made.

Ms HALL (Footscray) (10:54): I am delighted to make a contribution to the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Footscray is obviously a fairly long way from our alpine resorts, but as many people would know, I have a great affection for Victoria's High Country, and that is because my family are from Yackandandah. So I am very pleased to contribute to this and speak a little bit about my passion for Victoria's alpine regions. I inherited that from my father, who was a soil scientist and had a great interest in the alpine resorts and the beautiful environment that we have up there in Victoria's High Country. I was raised in a house where he often talked about issues like alpine grazing and the impact that that had on the very sensitive and beautiful environment in the alpine region. I am not a great skier, but I do love going up the mountain, especially in summer, actually. I was really pleased this summer to go up the mountain and see all of the mountain bike riding that was happening and bushwalking and all of the great activities that can take place in the summer months as well. I feel very fortunate to have Mum's house on the Great Alpine Road and to be able to head up the mountain with reasonable frequency.

This bill achieves a number of really important reforms relating to the establishment of Alpine Resorts Victoria, and I am going to focus mostly on the environmental benefits of these reforms. Broadly Alpine Resorts Victoria will enable an integrated, strategic and sector-wide approach to respond to the unique challenges facing the alpine area, including financial and climate change; rectify current duplication and poor coordination across strategic planning, marketing, infrastructure investment and climate change adaptation functions; address stakeholder concerns with the current model of governance; and very importantly, I think, embed traditional owner voices in alpine resort governance.

This bill will abolish the four alpine resort management boards. Any time the prospect of merging bodies is raised, consultation is very important. As the member for Yan Yean outlined, there has been extensive consultation with regard to this new entity, and I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the department in that consultation and the minister. I am pleased to share that a project governance structure was established that included the chairs and chief executive officers of the alpine resort management boards and the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council, among others. A stakeholder reference group was established that comprised representatives from traditional owner groups, resort businesses and user groups, surrounding local governments, regional tourism bodies and Parks

Victoria. Stakeholders were consulted jointly and separately, which enabled a broader range of voices and views to be shared than otherwise might have been the case.

This legislation is important to ensure coordinated future good governance of Victoria's beautiful alpine resorts: Mount Hotham, Falls Creek, Mount Buller, Mount Stirling, Lake Mountain and Mount Baw Baw. Currently the six resorts are managed by four alpine resort management boards. If this bill passes, Alpine Resorts Victoria will commence on 1 October 2022, which will of course minimise disruption to this year's snow season. Hopefully we will have a good season this year. It obviously has been a very challenging couple of years for the alpine resorts. I want to acknowledge the minister at the table, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, who has ensured that our alpine resorts have received very substantial support to get through these difficult times. I think that the packages of support that the Victorian government have provided the alpine resorts and the businesses on the mountains have reflected our understanding of the seasonal nature of their industry. I think that that has been very significant to get through these challenging times.

The alpine sector is, as others have noted, a really important part of our regional economies, contributing nearly \$1.1 billion to the Victorian economy and attracting 1 million visitors and sustaining nearly 10 000 jobs. I was really interested to hear the member for Yan Yean note that there are more visitors to our alpine resorts than to the Great Barrier Reef. I think that is a fascinating fact. It is so lovely when you go up to Victoria's north-east and see the towns of Bright, Freeburgh, Wandiligong—I get to say some great township names on this bill—Tangambalanga and of course beautiful Yackandandah. It is so important to the economies of those towns as well. There are so many reasons to visit the Ovens Valley, noting the contribution from the member for Ovens Valley, whether it is wine or music. The Yackandandah Folk Festival is a fantastic event that happens every year. There are so many reasons to go up to the north-east beyond the alpine resorts, which are beautiful all year round.

But because they are such unique places they also present unique challenges to their management. Their remoteness and the high altitude mean that the cost of establishing infrastructure and operating a business in the resorts is high compared to other towns or regions that rely on tourism. Alpine regions, as I noted, are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, whether through reduced snowfall or more frequent and more intense weather events. As I mentioned, with that sensitive alpine environment, of course, successive Labor governments have taken action to protect that unique environment, and stopping alpine grazing is something that I am particularly passionate about. Of course it is not enough to simply buy a heap of new snow machines and expect that to solve our problems when it comes to climate change in the alpine resorts.

This is not new information to the alpine resorts, who have been working for years to undertake adaptive approaches to ensure long-term sustainable operations. That includes measures to include off-season tourism as well as working with local businesses to provide green season products. Unlocking their full potential requires a coordinated strategy, implementation and investment, and I think this bill will deliver that. The last couple of years, as I have noted, have been really challenging for our alpine regions. The bushfires that we remember so vividly and the ongoing impacts of COVID have severely impacted the High Country. I understand what some of these challenges have been like and how locals have been impacted, again through my mum in Yackandandah and my frequent visits to Victoria's north-east. On that note, I will conclude my contribution, but I wish this bill a speedy passage.

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (11:03): I rise today to make a contribution on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. As the coalition has already said, we will not be opposing this bill. At the start of the week there was excitement in the place when the coalition said it would not be opposing the three bills on the government business program. Although we are not opposing this bill, do not think for a moment that we necessarily wholly support the bills that have been proposed in this place during this week—or quite often a lot of other weeks.

To the point, my contribution will make some particular observations of the bill today. Certainly in two of the last four parliaments I have had the absolute privilege to be able to represent one of

Victoria's iconic ski resorts, being Falls Creek. It has been a particular privilege working with the community. But it is not only Falls Creek itself. When it comes to voter numbers and things like that, on the local level there are not a great deal of voters that are enrolled to vote at Falls Creek, but there are the surrounding areas—Mount Beauty, Tawonga, Towong South. Even the member for Footscray, who just gave a contribution, mentioned Yack—Yackandandah. She tried to mention Tangambalanga, but that is Tangam—but anyway. We have got some great names. The thing is intrinsically the communities are well connected to the ski resorts, particularly Falls Creek and, for my colleague the member for Ovens Valley, Mount Hotham. And similarly with the contribution from the member for Yan Yean, I am not pumping her tyres up, but I know that she has been up there quite a bit and makes a good contribution to the sport that she loves.

While we are name-dropping and things like that, I just want to make a couple of mentions in dispatches of some of the locals that have participated in Olympic and winter sports and other local sports, not only in the state of Victoria but also other places—Perisher, Thredbo and overseas in other competitions. But certainly a lot of us would be familiar with Britt Cox. She was born and raised in Falls Creek, so she lives it, breathes it—everything. Another representative, Phil Bellingham, is a cross-country skier and also a multiple winter games champion. There is a long list.

Mr Wynne: What about Kirstie Marshall?

Mr TILLEY: Yes, Kirstie had a dip as well, and she did exceptionally well. We wish her well in her retirement nowadays. But there is certainly Phil Bellingham and—I have just got to make sure—Steve Lee. Now, Steve is the only Australian winner of a downhill world cup and was an Olympic commentator. He is only aged 60—a lot of us in the room are not too far from around that anyway. Unfortunately he suffered a stroke, and I wish him well. He is not so active nowadays, but I wish him well in any recovery and with his health going into the future.

But getting to the bill, I must say that in my experience here representing the Benambra district in the Victorian Parliament, in the Assembly, there have been many pieces of legislation that have been introduced to the place. The governments principally in my time have been ALP governments. We in this place try to be mature about some of the conversations that we have not only in this room but also in other parts and try and achieve the best for our respective communities, but we do not always win. You win some, you lose some, you draw the others. But anyway, we are challenged to do the best for our communities. But unfortunately this bill that has been introduced here is significantly light on detail. The feedback that I get from all corners around the state and from other ski resorts is that it is significantly light on detail. From all that feedback from the mountains, it lacks transparency in the fact that it was introduced by the Victorian Labor government, the present Labor government, and was going to be transformational, but for a lot of people that have invested, that work not only for statutory bodies but also for those private investors, the consultation process, the lack of—

A member: He's washing the dishes.

Mr TILLEY: Ease up over there. I have got the talking stick. Anyway, getting back, the point I make is that the consultation has been at best probably poor, because there are a lot of questions. And unfortunately after the hard work, the toil, the effort and COVID over the last couple of years, the rewards for their effort really have not been met as they should be. It is a hard slog where they are making a hell of a lot of effort to make profit or provide a service for those that enjoy snow sports, but the return on the investment is not there. But I am losing a fair bit of time; I had better move on. None of it happens by magic. Getting to the point, the locals there and the investors in the area have driven this. They have worked in cooperation and partnership to develop and create opportunities for their own benefit and for the benefit of the wider community, which spreads far away from Falls Creek. I mentioned earlier that those investors are also from major population centres.

We have got some of the data and the statistics: Falls Creek alone has got 5500 beds for accommodation; it gets 1 million visitors annually during the ski season. The industry as a whole, with

all those resorts—Falls, Hotham, Buller, Stirling, Lake Mountain and Baw Baw—collectively add to this state's economy in excess of \$1 billion a year, so it is not small in any part.

On the process that has been going on, I understand that there is a 270-page report written by experts who looked at this new centralised body. Now, the thing is it lacks detail. Significantly, I believe it is cabinet in confidence—look, you guys leak like a sieve sometimes; you really do. Notwithstanding that, this report, as I understand, has made absolutely no recommendations—not one. So where is it? I mean, in the transparency, the transformation and the process, where is this report? Where is the report that backs up wholly this move to centralise the management of our ski fields? It is good to see the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change join us as well. She is a significant stakeholder with her responsibilities with this, it being her bill. Significantly, how can the centralised authority, as proposed by this bill, represent these snow play areas at the same time as the larger resorts of Falls and Hotham subsidise the smaller resorts? We understand and we know to this day that the Victorian government is propping up Baw Baw. When you have got a centralised bureaucracy, how is it all going to work? How is the funding model going to work and the consultation? There is so much unknown at this stage.

On the subject of finances, I note in the second-reading speech—now the minister is here—that it talks about resorts having to draw on cash reserves. Now, the resorts had to call on their cash reserves during COVID. It has not been profitable; there is a significant investment that has to go into it. Anyone that had any involvement in asset management would understand the costs, whether it is for ongoing costs of infrastructure and keeping it all in one piece, and particularly in the High Country, where it is challenging to be able to make sure that those assets will live on into the future. But the thing is what we understand too is—the minister is in the Assembly at the moment—that if they run down their cash reserves, the government will provide a letter of comfort. When they are going broke, going out the door, there is a letter of comfort; you will be backing up the ski resorts unnecessarily. That is all at the taxpayers expense.

With the short half a minute I have left, we are talking about the formulas that are used to fund these assets, to run these assets, to run these resorts and give people a great visitation experience. With the formulas that are used to determine the service fees, some use a bed tax, a commercial rate tax. But also there are the fully enclosed commercial areas. Some of those big places are massive and are going to go out the door. But anyway, this is the bill. I wish I had more time; I have a lot more to contribute. I will have further to say in the future.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (11:14): It is a pleasure to speak on this important bill, and I am glad that it has broad support in the chamber and hopefully will in the other chamber too. Obviously as colleagues and the minister have said in their contributions, the main purpose of this is to effectively make fit-for-purpose governance arrangements around vitally important heritage assets—cultural heritage and environmental heritage—and a tourism gift effectively that we have across these resorts. I was surprised also to hear the member for Yan Yean say that visitations across these resorts are greater in number than those to the Great Barrier Reef. It is extraordinary when you think about it in those terms. It just adds further weight to the purpose of the bill, which is to provide a fit-for-purpose governance arrangement for such a significant asset.

I want to start by acknowledging the hard work, the dedication and the leadership of the existing boards that have been running these resorts for a long, long time. They are committed, they are experienced and they have shown leadership. This is not about them; it is just about the system in terms of having a governance arrangement which is unified, coordinated and to some extent centralised rather than having individual boards, because the challenges those resorts are facing are bigger than what each resort can contend with.

The main amendment proposed is the abolition of those four alpine resort management boards, Falls Creek, Mount Hotham, Mount Buller and Mount Stirling and Southern, as well as the coordinating council. I do not know enough about the coordinating council, but I suspect that was an attempt at

some point in the past to try and provide what the name says—coordination across those resorts. So the bill will establish a new governance entity, Alpine Resorts Victoria (ARV), as the overarching statutory corporate body to govern all alpine resorts, and it is an attempt, as the minister said and others have said, to promote a more coordinated response to the problems that have arisen since the implementation of the original act 25 years ago, in 1997.

I suspect some of the issues about financial sustainability, the ebbs and flows of the demands of tourism—whether it is a good season or not—have probably existed for some time. I think what has happened in the last couple of years has been that the impact of COVID has brought those into sharper focus not just here but around the world in a bunch of different leisure sectors, including alpine resorts and like resorts around the world. In addition, the fact that climate change is now something not to be negotiated with—it is clear there is an impact—is something perhaps that the 1997 act did not foresee in quite the same way we see it now. So the implementation of an overarching ruling body would allow for these problems and challenges to be responded to much more efficiently and successfully.

The main drivers of the reforms in this bill are around financial sustainability; strengthening long-term climate change mitigation, and the success of these resorts is dependent probably more on that than any other factor; improving efficiencies by greater cooperation, so back-office efficiency and duplication of a bunch of costs; and modernising governance. And really, as many, many ministers in this government and the Premier have said often in terms of COVID recovery, this is part of a story about COVID recovery that the Victorian government is committed to over this year and subsequent years.

I think if you look at the history that we have in terms of regulation reform—and I talked about this this week in this chamber and the Assistant Treasurer talked about it yesterday in question time—there are also aspects of regulatory reform here, because I would envisage when this board is established, subject to the bill having a secure passage through the Parliament, there will be businesses that operate across all the resorts that probably have to now deal with multiple registrations and multiple arrangements in terms of licences. You would imagine a future board would streamline those procedures across all its resorts for the same business, so there is a regulatory reform aspect to this as well.

Alpine Resorts Victoria, the new board that we are seeking to create from this bill, this legislation, will be tasked with ensuring that local stakeholders are consulted regarding specific strategic plans which directly affect those stakeholders. In some response to the member for Benambra—I do not want to verbal him but something around local knowledge being lost—in the bill we specify the role in relation to local knowledge and consultation with local stakeholders that the new board will have.

Interestingly also something which has become a bit more mainstream thankfully after decades of neglect by previous governments is the place of First Nations people in everything we do, and it is no different in this legislation. ARV will establish increased involvement by First Nations people, who were the traditional custodians of the lands on which the alpine resorts are located. That will be done by partnering with traditional owner organisations in developing policies, planning and decision-making around the resorts and maintenance in terms of economic sustainability. This amendment is critical, this bill is critical, for the future survival of those resorts, and not just for survival—if we look at it as a glass half full—but for a better future for those resorts, for local stakeholders, traditional owners, local communities, towns and also tourism in Victoria.

The minister, as is often the case with these appointments, will be required to appoint people to the board who have requisite skills and knowledge that would make them able to govern these resorts. What is interesting about this particular bill, though, is that the minister will also be required to appoint people who have, amongst a range of skills, cultural knowledge of Indigenous practices and cultures centred around the alpine environments, which I think is outstanding. You can imagine a future where some of these board members will actually be elders who have some knowledge and experience of and a deep cultural connection to that land. That can only be a good thing in terms of the future of these resorts. Maybe the tourism and commercial offerings will change over time to incorporate and be more around Indigenous culture and connection to the land.

I see a whole range of benefits through increased coordination of those resorts, including collaboration between them so they offer a customer experience—whether that be to Victorian customers or national or international customers—that is seamless across all the resorts and reducing admin burdens for those resorts and for businesses dealing with those resorts. It is probably no different to, when you think about it, the development of Parks Victoria and how Parks Victoria came to be. A range of different authorities used to run the public parks in Victoria, and there was seen to be far more benefit in providing a more fit-for-purpose outfit that consolidated a bunch of skills, established a bunch of practices and had enough economies of scale to do something that was far more market led, I suppose, tourist savvy and customer savvy with parks across Victoria. This is the same thing. These resorts have been doing excellent work under difficult circumstances beyond their control—as I mentioned, climate change, but also just financial sustainability. While this is primarily a governance change, it is one that I think we will look back on in 10 or 20 years and be thankful that we made because of where the alpine resorts will be at that point in time in terms of their financial sustainability, their tourism achievements, their cultural and Indigenous heritage and respect for the land.

I commend the minister. She committed to this last year or the year before, and here we are on the floor of the Parliament debating the bill that we committed to—after consultation, after much thought, and with a better future in mind for those alpine resorts. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (11:23): It is a pleasure to rise and make a few comments on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. As we have heard, this bill establishes Alpine Resorts Victoria (ARV) as the entity responsible for managing our six Victorian resorts: Falls Creek, Mount Hotham, Mount Buller, Mount Stirling, Lake Mountain and Mount Baw Baw. My electorate is very, very close to the Mount Hotham Alpine Resort; I just do not quite take it in. I might say that in the recent redistribution I was hoping just to creep a little bit further up the hill and get either Dinner Plain or Mount Hotham. It would have been fantastic to have a snowfield in my electorate of Gippsland East to complement the great lakes and the great national parks that we have in the far east of the state.

Whilst this bill oversees the alpine resorts, and we need strong functioning and successful alpine resorts, it also has implications for the neighbouring townships around those alpine resorts. In my electorate Omeo and Swifts Creek spring to mind because the attractiveness of and the visitation to those snowfields are heavily relied upon from an economic perspective by those nearby communities.

In establishing the ARV the bill abolishes the four existing resort management boards as well as the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council, and all assets and liabilities will be transferred. There is one element that I would like the new ARV to have a look at. Our alpine resorts should be open and attractive to all, and a lack of flexibility in travelling through the resorts is something that I would like this new body to have a look at and review. At the present time if you are travelling along the Great Alpine Road, you leave Mount Hotham and you are heading towards Bright and you have got to travel through the resort, or even if you are coming back the other way, there is a limited amount of time. If you stop over, whether that be to have a coffee or to have a toilet break, you will cop a fine if you are there for any length of time. The requirement is that you have to purchase a paid permit to stay in the resort for any length of time. Surely in this day and age when we are encouraging drivers to stop every 2 hours and take a decent break, we should be allowing a driver or a family to stop over in these resort areas for 30 minutes, 1 hour or even longer. Whether that is to have a coffee break, take a break from driving, go to the toilet or even to take a photo of the scenery that you want to put on social media, people should not have to pay for that privilege of a short-term stopover.

I do not know if any in the chamber have driven the road from Bright up to Mount Hotham, but the road on the northern side is very, very winding and very, very steep. If you are scared of heights, you do not want to be getting too close to the edge because it is a sheer drop-off. It takes a lot of concentration and you have got to take enormous care, particularly if you are travelling in conditions that are a bit wet, a bit icy and a bit slippery. For many there is a sense of relief when you get to the top. I can speak from personal experience of taking children up that stretch of road. If you wanted to get one of your kids carsick, you would go to that road. I reckon it would be the road in Victoria that

you would go to—the road up the northern side of Mount Hotham. Then when you arrive in Hotham, you think, ‘Gee, we can’t stop for any length of time or we’re going to get a fine from the resorts commission’.

So I would really like the ARV to have a look at something a bit more flexible and a bit more sensible: allow people to stop over for an hour or maybe two before they get a fine for not having paid for a permit. Obviously you have got to draw a line in the sand somewhere, and I certainly get that—maybe they do not want people staying there for 4 hours or whatever it might be—but I just do not think it is reasonable at the moment and I do not think we have got it right. I would like us to revisit that time frame for a whole range of reasons, with driver safety being at the forefront.

The other issue that I would like the new entity to have a look at is, and it is an issue that is topical in the resorts in my area—and when I talk about resorts I am talking about Mount Hotham and Dinner Plain—a neighbourhood safer place in the advent of fire. If you drove through the Hotham and Dinner Plain area in recent years, you would have seen where the flames literally came to the very, very edge of those communities. It basically burnt right into the township. Our resorts are not only occupied in winter, we obviously know that they are occupied year round. There has been a strong push, particularly from the Dinner Plain community—they have the area available to them—to create a neighbourhood safer place, a large cleared area for people and residents to go in the advent of fire. Sometimes you do not get a lot of notice. Sometimes you cannot get down the hill when a lightning strike goes through, as the Minister for Planning at the table would agree. You can have several hundred lightning strikes and in the wrong conditions when fuel loads are high you can have fire and flames all around you. It jumps ahead of the fire front. You have spot fires and you cannot see where you are going because of the smoke—it is literally unsafe to drive. I know there has been a really strong push from the Dinner Plain community to have a neighbourhood safer place established that would suit not only that community but also Hotham, which is literally 5 minutes up the road, for people to be able to gather. I know there are issues around vegetation offsets and there are other matters to be sorted out, but it comes back to that basic starting point where we need to put human safety first. I would like to see the ARV work with not only those resorts in my area but the resorts around Victoria that are very, very fire prone due to the lightning strikes that occur and sort that out.

In relation to the changes being made, there appears to be relatively little change to the legislation other than adopting the ARV as the management structure, the single authority. It should provide a united voice to be able to address some of these issues that I have raised. We would like a little bit more detail on how it is going to operate, but under this centralised governance model it would be good if we could get some very clear guidelines around things like firebreaks and neighbourhood safer places for communities to be able to gather.

The alpine resorts contribute \$1.1 billion to the economy each year and attract a lot of visitors and up to 10 000 jobs, but it is much more than that. For those surrounding communities like Omeo, Swifts Creek and even Bruthen and Bairnsdale further down the hill, when people are travelling to our snowfields they are boosting those local economies within those different townships. The ARV should consider those areas outside their resorts in relation to promoting the routes to the snowfields. We would like to see obviously a lot more people coming through Gippsland, but it is an option that is perhaps not advertised that well—the ability to take in the Gippsland Lakes and some of the national parks on your way up to the snowfields. It would be pleasing to have a strong recognition of, I guess, local economies and private enterprise and not only in those routes to the snowfields. But the ARV also needs to give a strong voice and a lot of consultation to private enterprise within those resorts, because they are the backbone of the economy. There is a great opportunity to grow these locations outside of the winter and make them even more year-round destinations than they have become.

What we need is an agreed investment master plan, if you like, to avoid individual lobbying by the different resorts. We need a master plan of what is going to be delivered, who needs what infrastructure, who is lacking what at the moment and what becomes a priority. I would also like to see a guarantee that there will be local board members. I would not like the ARV to be established

with a board that is predominately Melbourne based. I would like to see members of the board coming from communities like Mount Hotham and Dinner Plain—people who actually live there and reside there and know the intricate details of the issues that arise year round. I also understand councils are seeking to have strong pathways of consultation. There is a bit there for the new board to look at, and we are not opposing this legislation.

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (11:34): I too rise to make a contribution on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, which, as has been mentioned by many members, is seeking to establish Alpine Resorts Victoria, or ARV, as a single board of governance for Victorian alpine reserves and resorts and merge the four current alpine resort management boards into a single governance body. Those four boards are obviously overseeing Falls Creek, Mount Buller, Mount Stirling, Mount Hotham and the Southern board, which is for Mount Baw Baw and Lake Mountain.

This is a really important reform for our alpine areas. Before I go into why it is an important reform I want to just touch on some of the benefits and impacts of the alpine areas for the community and also draw on what the member for Yan Yean mentioned about paying tribute to our Winter Olympians. A particular shout-out to Scotty James, an eastern suburbs boy. I was reading the story about how he got into snowboarding very young, three years old I think, taking a trip up to Mount Buller, and he seemed to be there almost every weekend after that. I believe even at school when they said, ‘What would you like to be?’, he said he wanted to be an action sports person. I do not know if you managed to catch any of the interviews of Scotty James, but he just seemed the most genuine, down-to-earth person and a fantastic ambassador for Australia, for the sport and for the skiing, snowboarding and winter sports in Australia. It is a story I think that resonates with a lot of us.

Obviously most of the population in Victoria live in Melbourne. Much of the population that does not live in Melbourne is not located in close proximity to the alpine areas, but it is an area that is much loved and is accessible. It is only 2 or 3 hours away to cover most of the resorts, and it is something that you can look forward to and take your kids up to on a winter holiday. I know that is something that we certainly want to be looking at this winter—the last couple of winters have obviously been really difficult with the pandemic situation—just to introduce the kids to the snow, even if it is a bit of snow play and tobogganing. It is really important that we have properly functioning resorts, well-run resorts that are sustainable into the long term and that can provide for a whole heap of users, because it does inspire some of those visitors from a very young age to go on and repeat the feats of people like Scotty James.

It is a huge contributor to the Victorian economy. In winter these resorts collectively contribute nearly \$1.1 billion to the economy, attracting 1 million visitors and sustaining nearly 10 000 jobs. I think the member for Gippsland East and the member for Benambra also were mentioning that it is not just about the on-mountain jobs but also about the off-mountain jobs and those supporting those nearby townships. That is correct; it is a whole-of-community impact. Whether people go up to the snow for the day or they go for a weekend, even if they are staying on the mountain, it is the trip up and back. I know, for us, we will always pop in to get some local produce and stop by a local restaurant, have a meal and contribute to some of those local towns that surround those alpine resorts, and it is really that broader economic impact that makes it so important that we do have a sustainable alpine tourism industry.

Just looking at the drivers for having the reform that is proposed under this legislation, the primary ones are really about the improved governance and financial stability, bringing all of those boards into a single management but still recognising the unique characteristics that each alpine resort has. Consolidating the resort management will improve the capacity to fund essential infrastructure and operations, particularly in what is a more uncertain future, and the government’s model will provide a modern and fit-for-purpose legislative and governance framework that increases transparency and accountability.

The current legislation, as has been mentioned, was put forward in 1997 and limits the ability to effectively respond to the long-term challenges facing the sector. And of course there is improving functional efficiency through this single governance model, improving coordination and reducing duplication and the fragmentation of roles. There are a couple of particular elements that I want to identify that have been drawn out a lot more in this bill compared to the previous bill, and they are stated in the initial principles and the objectives of the act. One is in relation to the recognition of the traditional owners. The traditional owners were mentioned in the 1997 legislation, but they are given a lot more primacy in this bill. In particular it notes that the Parliament recognises that traditional owners, as the original custodians of the land in alpine resorts, have a unique status as the descendants of Australia's First People. I think this is a really significant element of this legislation. It is not just about consulting the traditional owners of this land but really recognising that the traditional owners were and are the original custodians of this land, have been active on this land and living on this land for tens of thousands of years and know that alpine landscape. It is really important that their voices are heard and that recognition is provided, and I think the legislation does a fantastic job of incorporating those elements.

The other important recognition in the objectives talks about the environment and ecology of the resorts and the effect of climate change on them. The previous legislation also talked about environment and sustainability, but in those 25 years obviously the focus on climate change has increased a lot more. I think the impact of climate change on the alpine resorts is particularly acute. The CSIRO did some modelling on the impact of climate change on the Victorian ski season, and it predicted that it could become up to 55 days shorter under a low-risk model and up to 80 days shorter under a worst-case scenario. Given that the ski season is typically 112 days long, this would obviously have a massive, massive impact on the alpine resorts. There are obviously technological and mechanical ways of trying to manufacture snow, but even if you do not have the clouds, you still need to have the cold weather and you still need to have the water source to be able to create those conditions.

It will be an ongoing challenge for all the boards, and that is a challenge that all the resorts face equally, I would say. It is not just a single resort issue, it is not just a statewide issue; it is a global issue that needs to be confronted in order to make sure that we have a sustainable alpine tourism industry. There is an enormous amount of work obviously that both the government and the operators in this space are doing to combat this, and I think that having this board structure in place will certainly assist this. So I commend the bill to the house.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (11:44): I rise to speak on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and I do so recognising the importance of getting things right so we can recognise the uniqueness of areas of Victoria and get the best outcomes from these fantastic parts of our state. This is a bill that will bring together the six mountains under a framework of cooperation. I note too that at the table I have my colleague who, when we were in government, was the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. During that time he was working with the department on the exact same framework that we have here before us today. The current minister would have come into the role seven years ago with much of the background and work that needed to be done already in shape and ready to go. This is the reason I am raising this and wanting to speak on this bill. Bureaucracy is just too long and too onerous when you need to get outcomes for people who are in business and who are trying to contribute to the state by running businesses that offer experiences and opportunities—or any businesses in fact. So I find it a little bit disappointing that it is eight years since this framework, this opportunity, this idea, should have been implemented—and even to hear some of the members on the other side referring to the fact that it is two years since the first concept of the government was put forward. These time frames are ridiculous. This is forming a committee. This is pretty much getting a group of people together and cooperating—

Members interjecting.

Ms BRITNELL: A little bit more. Okay, I agree. It is a little bit more than that. But the reality of this is timing is critical in business. I look at the very similar activity that we have in my part of the world

through the recent structures that the government has put together for the Great Ocean Road. What we had there was a mismatch of departments not able to speak to each other very well and businesses trying to do their best to run visitation experiences. I was getting so many complaints in my office from people from our region who would go down to the Great Ocean Road and use the toilet facilities, and they were filthy and just shocking. I see the reason for better management and cohesive management, but two years on from that being established when you write to them or talk to the committee it is like, 'We're getting our feet under the table. There are no outcomes yet because it's all a bit new'. You know, if you start a business and two years later you are saying you are getting your feet under the table and you have not got any outcomes yet, that is just not going to work. It is going to fail.

I raise this because it is the experience I have seen right across my electorate. Six years ago when I entered this role I was introduced to the owners of the Nelson bait shed. The business there sells bait for fishermen. It is a great little business. It sold fishing licences. All they needed was to have a structure above their head. It was a little jetty with a shed over it and a counter and a freezer with bait in it. The government changed the management of the river—the mouth had closed a lot more than it was—and that is all fine, but the river was rising and the floor of the shed, which was the jetty, was underwater, so the building was condemned or was looking like it was not going to be able to be used. The government was approached to help because it was their asset. For six years this guy had just red tape and onerous requirements—nothing. He could not get anything.

At one point in time they actually quoted a \$300 000 build. Most farmers in my electorate would know that you could put that shed up for about \$50 000. It was just crazy stuff. So difficult was it for that business to work with the government on a lease to be able to continue doing business there and just get a shed and not have it condemned that when in July last year they said, 'You have to leave the building because it's now condemned or it's no longer fit for purpose, and we'll continue to work with you' he walked away. Nelson is a township that relies on tourism. This gentleman and his family were making a modest living. It was not Crown Casino bringing in zillions of dollars, it was a modest business that provided a service to our community. You come to the area and you want to go fishing; you need bait. You want to go fishing; you need a licence. You want to hire a boat, you want to do these things, and they were basically offering a service to the community.

It is not an isolated case. In fact the Princess Margaret Rose Caves have the exact same story. They were trying to negotiate another lease with the government. I do not know if you have been there, but it is a beautiful experience of stalagmites and stalactites. I did go there quite often. They rang me several times and just said, 'Look, we cannot work with the government. They don't understand you're running a business. They won't give us any continuity. We don't know how long we can get a lease for. They won't give us a lease'. The government left them without a lease—so no security for the business. They said, 'How can we employ people and renew their employment when we actually don't have a clue whether we can operate from month to month?'. Eventually it was exactly the same thing—they walked away. And guess what? The Princess Margaret Rose Caves are closed still. This is what is on the website today, the Parks Victoria website—

Ms Green: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, this is a very narrow bill. It is on alpine resorts. If the member wants to talk about something else, she can do it in a members statement or by substantive motion. It has got nothing to do with the south-west of the state.

Mr R Smith: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Yan Yean spent the bulk of her contribution talking about athletes, albeit in the snowfields. I have been listening closely to the member for South-West Coast, and I think she is totally in keeping with the bill and is quite entitled to canvas the issues that she is canvassing.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Connolly): On the point of order, the member has strayed somewhat from the bill. If I could bring her back, we can continue.

Ms BRITNELL: Thank you, Acting Speaker. As I was describing, the bill talks about a committee that brings the six mountains together. I am talking about a committee and the exact same department and the challenges of having to make sure that when these structures are set up the government gets out of the way and makes sure there is enough ability for the businesses to do business in those regions with the land, which is a state asset that the government has management and ownership of. I was actually saying, before I was interrupted, that these businesses had so much challenge they actually walked away. I want to read from the Parks Victoria website. It says:

Please note, Princess Margaret Rose Cave and visitor centre remain closed for assessments and upgrade works. The campground and picnic area will be open for visitors and campers to enjoy during the Victorian and South Australian School Holiday periods only.

Ms Green: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the bill is not about the Princess Margaret Rose Cave. It is about the alpine resorts governance, and she is just defying rulings from the Chair and straying from the bill.

Ms BRITNELL: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, this legislation is about setting up a structure. I am referring to similar structures across the state where the government have worked so poorly with the community that businesses have closed and walked away—in Nelson, the Princess Margaret Rose Cave, the bait shed. These businesses have closed because of inept government interference.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Connolly): On the point of order, I can see a slight correlation there, if the member would resume her contribution.

Ms BRITNELL: Thank you. I will finish by saying this mismanagement by government was so obvious that the minister actually admitted it. The minister actually put into writing the fact that they could have done it better—did not go as far as an apology but certainly admitted they were wrong. We have still got businesses that are struggling to work with leases and public lands. When you do not have the innovation and the business approach, that is what will end up happening. So I hope this Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill does take heed from what we are seeing on the Great Ocean Road and what we have seen in South-West Coast with Nelson. These towns rely on businesses doing their bit, and if they have got so much trouble working with government that they walk away, that is not good for Victorian businesses. That is not good for tourism. We are about to try and rebuild and recover from a pandemic, and the way the government have been doing business for the last seven years has been disorganised. It is resulting in businesses walking away because they cannot work with government. Take note of the need for businesses to be innovative. Put the businesspeople in the discussions. Do not ignore them.

Mr CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (11:54): It is with some pleasure this morning that I rise to speak on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I must say in reflecting on the elements in this bill I was also reflecting on the unique Australian landscape. Of course we have a very old landscape. We are one of the oldest continents on this planet, and we have mountains running effectively from Queensland all of the way down the eastern seaboard and then taking a hockey turn about where our alpine resorts are and heading across to South Australia. Geologically we have seen that whole area tectonically tilted and folded extensively.

What we see as a consequence of that is a very unique landscape from Victoria right through to southern New South Wales, and in that area we have the Victorian High Country and the New South Wales High Country. In an Australian context, a continent that is very hot and very dry, we have here a unique landscape that is quite high—in fact very high in an Australian context, not quite so high in a global context—where we as Victorians and visitors to our great state are able to take that great opportunity of going into that High Country and enjoying the experiences. Those experiences in some ways are unique depending on the time of the year when people might visit these unique landscapes. Of course famously it is where people can go in an Australian context to very much enjoy those winter sports of skiing and snowboarding and those types of experiences—cross-country skiing and all sorts

of things. And in a summer context I know many people enjoy going into the High Country and enjoying the wildflowers that they might see and enjoying the tracks and the hikes and other things throughout that area.

What we have historically seen is a bit of a hotchpotch of government management arrangements where each resort has a number of competing government entities that have management responsibility for parts of those landscapes. Indeed we have got six alpine resort management committees that in so many ways have been attempting to do the same thing, which is to make the strategic plans and investments required to maintain those landscapes, to maintain the tourism opportunities and to protect the environment. I think in so many ways these unique landscapes require very fresh and new management structures to be put in place to manage the risk.

The way I would see those risks is they are very similar to the risks experienced along the Great Ocean Road and by many of our other remarkable natural landscapes, and that is competition from all of us who want to go there and experience the sights and delights and opportunities that exist in those areas. Not surprisingly we also see a number of risks from a changing climate. The reality is that climate change provides very unique challenges to these landscapes. Historically people have been able to go up to the alpine areas for many months of the year. I think the Queen's Birthday weekend early in June is the start of the ski season, and people are often able to experience the delights of skiing in particular right through to the September school holidays. I know my family will often take up the opportunity of cross-country skiing in our September school holidays.

These risks require a landscape management authority to manage the broader landscape, and I think the creation of this new body provides and recognises that these unique and individual ski resorts are not in competition with one another, that we need to disentangle the management arrangements that do exist and in some ways, as I would see it, mirror the approach adopted so successfully by the minister around the new authority that is being set up to manage the Great Ocean Road and all of the various competing interests and priorities within that landscape.

I would very much imagine that once this authority is established there will be a bunch of strategic work that they will undertake and that they will build on the work of those previous committees. They will align their plans. They will align very much their investment priorities that they wish to make. Indeed they will put in place those streams of income and other things to enable them to invest in the region, to have a coherent plan of investment, to put in place the various strategies required to drive tourism and to drive the opportunities that might exist—but also to manage all of those landscape-wide risks that exist and that I have heard people across the chamber reflecting on, whether it be the fire season issues that come up from time to time or whether it be of course the changing climate and the risks associated with having a lesser period of snowfall and less opportunity that might come from that through to making sure that as a tourism driver for our economy in that High Country every opportunity is created to grow the season, to spread the opportunity, to spread the economic opportunity, to make the investments, to protect the landscape and the like.

As I say, the High Country is unique in continental Australia, here in Victoria and southern New South Wales. I know that the minister is keen to put in place management structures; that is why she has led this reform. I very much look forward to the substantial opportunities in the years to come, as I have no doubt there will be lots of opportunities to align our strategic plan across the alpine area. I have no doubt there will be more opportunity to spread and grow the tourism time that people engage in in the High Country and to provide those opportunities not just in the winter months but importantly through the summer months, when I know so many Victorians like going up into the High Country and enjoying those magnificent sunsets, those late-evening pastel colours that one sees in the landscape, those beautiful summer flowers and the like.

I had the great pleasure of spending some time near the High Country over this just-gone summer season. It is a fantastic landscape. It has got of course tens of thousands of years of Indigenous history. There are very strong Indigenous communities through the north-east of Victoria and into the Southern

Highlands of New South Wales. We of course want to recognise at every opportunity, with every bill, the opportunity to bring into our structures, into our thinking, Indigenous cultural history and knowledge of our landscapes. I look forward to seeing that continue to grow. It is certainly a hallmark of this government that we recognise that Victoria was Indigenous land, is Indigenous land, and that they have the knowledge that we need to take our state forward, to recognise the opportunities and the challenges in our landscape.

I certainly very much commend the minister on this bill. I look forward to this bill passing both chambers, and I look forward to seeing the work unveiled over the years to come.

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (12:04): It is a pleasure to rise for the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and I rise today with some intimate knowledge of the alpine resorts, having previously been the minister responsible for their operation. As the member for Eildon said, we will not be opposing this bill, and in fact I support the proposal that is put forward by the government with regard to putting the six resorts collectively under one board, one management operation. Indeed my issues, I guess, are in the way that this government will implement these particular proposals, as the implementation is probably more important than the policy proposal itself. We will wait and see how that goes, but in principle I think that the structure proposed by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change is a sound one, and I say that because back in 2014 I actually commissioned a report into how to restructure the management of these particular alpine resorts—and I will come back to that shortly.

It is probably worth letting the house know of some of the history of the alpine resorts and the financial instability of some of them. I am absolutely 100 per cent in line with every other speaker in this house in talking about the benefits of these alpine resorts both from a tourism point of view but also in highlighting how important they are in terms of their environmental value. But the fact of the matter is that for many years the alpine resorts, particularly Mount Baw Baw and Lake Mountain, were an impost on the taxpayer. I do not necessarily mind that, in that I think there should be times when the government does prop up certain organisations or agencies for the greater good. Certainly the greater good in this instance was allowing Victorians to experience the environment in those areas, and the support for the local economies was also very important. But that does not mean that governments should not find the most efficient way of propping up those sorts of examples.

Now, back pre-2010 it was reported—actually, in 2013 it was reported—that the Mount Baw Baw Alpine Resort Management Board alone had received more than \$13 million in taxpayer funding since 2008 but still reported a \$2.3 million loss in 2011–12. Many commentators have commented on the fact that those alpine resorts did indeed cost the taxpayer money. In fact an Auditor-General's report did say also that for Mount Baw Baw and Lake Mountain the financial sustainability assessment was that for the years 2008 through to 2011 there was a high risk with regard to their financial sustainability.

When I took the role of environment minister it was made very clear to me that there were some issues with the financial stability, and it was important to take some immediate action. So one of the things that I did then was appoint Belgravia Leisure to oversee the management of Mount Baw Baw and Lake Mountain. Now, pre that arrangement we were looking at a combined loss of about \$2.5 million for those two resorts, and the taxpayer basically had to prop up those losses. Upon appointing Belgravia—the contract was confirmed in 2014—that loss went down to about \$900 000. The following year, 2015, under their management and their strategies with bringing more people to the mountain, that loss dropped to just \$600 000, which was a great benefit from the \$2.5 million that the taxpayer had previously worn.

Now, what was disappointing was that with the advent of the Andrews government Belgravia was dismissed in December 2016. The management of those two mountains was given back to the local board and, by extension, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. In 2017 that loss had jumped to just over \$1.4 million, and the following year, 2018, that loss had jumped to \$1.8 million. So we can see that just by putting an external commercial manager in we significantly

reduced the losses that were apparent and relieved the burden on the taxpayer. Removing that and going back to the previous arrangements by progress just made us continue to take those losses. It is a disappointment in that regard that the minister at the time thought that ideologically it was better to have it run by the department rather than save the taxpayer money. That is a significant disappointment.

The second-reading speech states that:

The establishment of Alpine Resorts Victoria will achieve savings through improved coordination, efficiencies of scale and reduction of duplication.

Again, I am supportive of that. As I said, what is disappointing is that while this legislation finds those financial efficiencies and reduces duplication, that was all in a report that I commissioned back in 2014. We would have implemented this had we won in 2014. This has been sitting in the department without actually having been shown to the minister—or maybe the minister saw it; I cannot speak to that. But the fact that this proposal to save the taxpayer money has been sitting in the department, sitting with the government, for the last eight years is quite disappointing. It should have been implemented earlier so the burden on the taxpayer could have been relieved a whole lot earlier.

Now, the member for Eildon told me that during the departmental briefing there was an inability to explain what savings would be made under the new structure and there was no opportunity to give any sort of detail. Again, in this report, while I understand the figures would have changed, there was quite a comprehensive list of where savings could be achieved and in what areas. In fact many different models were foreshadowed in this report. The report said that if we outsourced all the back office operations we could achieve a \$1.5 million saving over the course of the year, and if we looked at bringing in an external manager, as was our experience with Mount Baw Baw and Lake Mountain, with the five resorts we could save about \$2.4 million a year.

There was a suggestion that if we put a headlease on for each resort and the government received ongoing lease payments in that regard, it could save about \$4.8 million. A single alpine board back then in 2014 would have achieved \$5.5 million of savings. The best savings came from a collective headlease in the way that Thredbo is run. That would have achieved even more savings, but it was considered there were conflicting interests with regard to appointing that headlease, so the single alpine board was the best way to go. I just wonder if the minister is aware of a more comprehensive breakdown of where the savings would be made. As I said, this report from 2014 would at least give the department and the minister a guide to where to look for those savings so that we could comprehensively tell the public where those savings were going to be met.

I do not intend to speak for too much longer except to say that I just take issue with one of the lines in the second-reading speech, which says:

... alpine resort management arrangements are currently fragmented and lack coordination, with no overarching plan or single authority to provide strategic leadership to the sector.

What I would say to that is that is the minister's role. The minister's role with relation to the alpine resorts is exactly summed up in that sentence, so if she is saying that there is not a plan, there is no authority to provide strategic leadership, that is a reflection on her. I worked very closely with the alpine resorts when I was minister, and that is exactly what I did—worked with the alpine resorts to give that strategic leadership, to coordinate the stakeholders and to make sure that there was an overarching plan. The single authority in this case is the minister—it is the government and by extension the minister—so to state that that is not there is an indictment of the minister, and I think that is something that really needs looking at.

In short, we are not opposing the bill. I support the structure as it is put forward. I am very concerned about the government's ability to implement it with minimal disruption, and quantifying where those savings are going to be is certainly something that the minister should put forward to this house.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarnait) (12:12): I too rise to speak on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and we have heard some wonderful contributions in the house this morning about how incredible these resorts and Victoria's alpine country are. Whether you are a tourist or whether you are lucky enough indeed for it to be part of your seat, it has been wonderful to hear about all the different offerings from many different resorts, most of which I have not yet been lucky enough to visit. But I do have something that comes to mind about the first time I came to Victoria many, many years ago; I think it must have been about 16 or 17 years ago. I did something that was quite out of my comfort zone—it most certainly would be now, and it was back then—but it was something I really wanted to do.

I was living in Canberra at the time, and the lovely young man that I had happened to move down there to be with, my now husband, had a really great idea for us both to head on up to Mount Stirling and do the Man from Snowy River horse ride up to Craig's Hut. I did a bit of horseriding when I was much, much younger, in my childhood, although I do not know if my husband had ever been on a horse before. I remember we got up early and we drove from Canberra across the border, and one of the interesting highlights of the trip was stopping at Glenrowan, which both of us had never been to before. I think we even stopped there for scones on the way. I remember we stayed at this beautiful town, Merrijig, and the views from this town were absolutely breathtaking, because before us you could see the mountains shoot straight up—Mount Buller and Mount Stirling. I remember that the ride was a really long day and we had to be there really early, and I think it must have been from the foot of Mount Stirling. It was about 6 hours on horseback—3 hours up and 3 hours down. For someone who had not ridden for a very long time—that was me—and then for my husband, who had never really been on horseback before, it was a very intense ride up and a very intense ride down. I remember that night sitting on the balcony of the place that we were staying at in Merrijig, probably having a glass of wine, and both of us being unable to move. But I am talking about the highlights of that trip, and it was absolutely breathtaking. Our High Country is absolutely intoxicating. That was me as a young woman—the first real experience that I had in Victoria. It is one that sticks with me even today. I am looking forward to my children being of an age when we can take them on that same ride.

In Victoria we are really lucky to have an incredible alpine region with quite a few resorts. Depending on your budget and whether you have got a family or young kids, you really have a choice of places that you can go to. We have been to Mount Buller, although not in the ski season—not in winter. We did check it out in the summer, and like the member for Footscray talked about, we saw some pretty incredible people on mountain bikes—I think they were doing mountain bike downhill racing. Having just watched the Winter Olympics, and having spent most of the time watching that with my eyes closed because they seemed like such extreme sports these athletes were doing, watching downhill mountain bike racing at the top of Mount Buller was very, very extreme, but it certainly looked like everyone was having a really good time.

The other resort location that I went to, as the member for Yan Yean reminded me, was Lake Mountain. I remember taking the kids there when they were quite young and stopping at the bakery in Marysville before going up to the resort, where we were able to enjoy some very safe, very smooth downhill tobogganing with the kids. It was a lovely experience. It was just a daytrip from Melbourne—something very easy to do. To anyone listening today who has young children, I would encourage you to go there. It was absolutely fantastic. Our kids had a wonderful time.

This bill is such an important bill for our alpine regions. Our alpine regions have really been hit hard over the past two years with this global pandemic, and I am sure that they are looking forward to a bigger and brighter 2022 ski season as we start to turn our minds to winter this year. Hopefully tourists will be able to return in droves and do all of the things at these resorts that they have enjoyed for many, many years past and will enjoy for many, many years into the future.

Alpine Resorts Victoria is also going to be really good for looking at climate change and bringing together the resorts in our alpine region to have a strategy to help tackle the reality and the challenges facing them that climate change presents. It is a very important industry—\$1.1 billion is not something

that is easily dismissed. It is a \$1.1 billion contribution to Victoria's economy that this region makes, with up to 10 000 jobs locally. That is a lot of people that are able to get work up in our alpine region at these resorts each and every single year.

The bill will establish that new entity, Alpine Resorts Victoria. It is going to help manage all of the resorts in our alpine region and provide what really is an avenue for greater cohesion and, most importantly, efficiency in the management of these resorts. We want to see them up and running now and for many, many, many years into the future. Each of the local resort management boards have done a fantastic job of managing a lot of the issues and challenges that they have faced over the past couple of years, but ultimately they are really limited to their own little patch in the mountains. Some of these resorts are really big and some are on the smaller side, and that is why Alpine Resorts Victoria is going to merge them into one decision-making body. It is going to be more financially viable, ensuring that resorts are not losing money by maintaining individual boards. It is going to allow for greater coordination between resorts when it comes to tackling, as I mentioned, the big issues affecting the region, like climate change. It is also going to allow our resorts to work together, to plan and develop that strategy and rebuild and recover from the impacts of COVID. It is also a great opportunity, as we have heard from members on this side of the house, for the alpine industry to develop a closer working relationship with many of our First Nations people, who do have a very deep and profound spiritual connection to that region. The bill is going to require that the combined skills of board members cover a range of experience. They are going to include financial management and commercial skills, tourism and alpine activities, environmental management and conservation, as well as public administration and governance.

In conclusion, this bill is all about helping our alpine resorts to get back on track and look forward to a bigger and brighter future. We know that so much of the industry has faced challenges due to COVID and is still facing challenges, as it has in the past, in relation to tackling climate change. They need leadership, they need direction and they need to be able to meet those challenges head on together. That is what this bill is going to do; it is going to bring them together. For the thousands of Victorians who rely on the industry each and every single year, this bill is going to help pave a future for those local jobs—10 000 of them. It is also going to provide a future for those who love to head to the snow for the holidays. I really hope that in years to come—I am not sure if it will be this year—my family and I will finally be able to get to experience the winter wonderland that I know so many Victorians and people from across this country experience in our alpine regions. I truly look forward to that. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (12:22): I wish to contribute this afternoon on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I think in order for the Parliament and the people of Victoria to truly appreciate the value of this legislation we must look at not what the government says but what the government does. When perusing this piece of legislation over the last week I could not help but notice great similarities with a piece of legislation the government brought to this chamber, passed and inflicted upon the people of Victoria only two years ago, and that of course was the legislation to establish the single authority the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority.

Mr T Bull: How's that going?

Mr RIORDAN: It's a real winner for Victoria—not.

Before I go further on the areas of concern that the good people of the alpine regions have identified I will acknowledge the fact that the workers, communities and people in our alpine resort regions, like those along the Great Ocean Road, have done it really tough for the last two years. One thing I know from my area, and I am sure it has come from the consultation we have had with people in the alpine region, is they know only too well that they cannot afford another year of disruption and chaos in the way they run their resorts and their communities. So when the government offers them the opportunity for one big new authority that will help govern them strategically, protect them from climate change and resolve 200 years of treaty negotiation, those communities will expect to benefit from it.

Let us look, for example, at some of the concerns alpine communities have had and let us measure that up against the reality of what this government has managed to do with an almost identical authority. One of the concerns is clarity around funding. Like we are talking about here, combining the six alpine resorts, we combined the communities along the Great Ocean Road. What do we know about that? We know that the little community in Peterborough has lost the \$200 000 per year that was used to service that community. It was rushed through and amalgamated into this great new entity so that the new bureaucratic system could be funded. We also know that a second piece of legislation was rushed through this Parliament only last year to give the Great Ocean Road Authority new taxing powers. The new Great Ocean Road Authority can implement parking fees and tolls and all sorts of charges and fees on people's homes and communities in the Great Ocean Road region, so one could expect that this will be a mechanism that this cash-strapped, money-grubbing government will clearly inflict upon the alpine communities into the future. We could expect that.

It says communities were worried that larger resorts may be forced to prop up smaller resorts. Well, that is a fair concern, and I am sure the smaller resorts want their own identity and want to be self-funding. But we can tell those smaller resorts that that is exactly what will happen—that money will be sucked from all the communities to keep the instrumentality up. It is causing great hardship—just ask the Peterborough and Princetown CFAs, who no longer have their local community funding because it is all being funnelled through to prop up the Great Ocean Road Authority.

The minister and the government have told us that we are going to have cost savings through this project. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning has not been able to quantify what those cost savings are, but let us look at the cost saving that we have received on the Great Ocean Road. It is zero, absolutely zero. In fact by the time the new Great Ocean Road Authority built its new multimillion-dollar head office, conveniently located all the way at one end of the Great Ocean Road in Torquay, by the time they got all their new consultants, not to mention the probably many hundreds of thousands or a million on a brand new logo—which was I think the first thing they undertook, because emptying rubbish bins, servicing toilets and making visitor experiences better has not yet come onto their radar. We have got a new head office, new logos, new paperwork and probably business cards—those types of important things have been seen to—but the cost savings, well, they have not yet been seen on the Great Ocean Road.

It has been raised by operators in the alpine region that there is a lack of acknowledgement of the importance of private enterprise and how it is private enterprise that actually drives investment and visitor numbers. It is not the taxpayer and it is not a government department that make our visitor experiences in Victoria dynamic and wonderful and make places that people and visitors and overseas guests want to come to. So what do we know has happened about private enterprise, that verve that we need so desperately in Victoria? Two years after the Great Ocean Road Authority was established what do we know? There are two caravan parks now sitting idle, empty and without operators. The busiest single Parks Victoria asset at the Cape Otway lighthouse, employing 45 people—a beacon of employment, opportunity and visitor numbers—guess what? In June this year it shuts, and what is the department's response? They do not have a response. What is the Great Ocean Road Authority's response? 'Oh, we haven't determined who owns that and who's going to manage it and how it's going to be operated'. It is going to sit idle.

So the people of the alpine communities will absolutely have great concerns about whether this government is capable of implementing a single authority when the one single authority managing tourism, managing fragile coastal assets, managing climate change, managing visitor numbers and most importantly being prepared to work with local communities has zero runs on the board after two years with, quite frankly, zero outcomes on the horizon. And that is not just me saying that. You can talk to the tourism bodies. You can talk to the local communities. You can do what I did last week and spend some time with some traditional owners down on country at Hordern Vale. They told me that after two years they cannot even get a reply to letters to the new committee and the new organisation, because it is not acting in the interests of the local community but it is acting in the interests of the

department and it is acting in the interests of the government's agenda of the day, and they are in complete contrast and conflict with the needs and desires of those local communities that rely so heavily on those assets.

What do we know about board composition? Because often that is what drives it. We can make our determinations about how well this government drives, but what about the board composition? The Great Ocean Road is made up of three shires predominantly. It is made up of lots of vibrant businesspeople who have had a lot of success and driven those economies so well. After all the rhetoric about the importance of one authority they put one local businessperson from the whole area onto that board. We have got a former premier's wife, we have got friends from Melbourne and we have got people with long histories with the Labor Party on the board, but have we got local input? No, we have very little input. And I might venture to say that the one local person feels at times that he is carrying the burden of the whole area on his shoulders, because no-one else in those communities gets to talk to anyone. So the people in our alpine communities can quite rightly feel concerned that they will lose local control, that they will lose local input and that the area that they love so much, that is so important to them and that drives those local economies, will be completely left out as they go along.

Another important stakeholder of course in the alpine communities will be the local government areas. I can tell the people in the alpine communities with absolute certainty that after two years we still do not have agreements on who empties rubbish bins in the Great Ocean Road area. Can you imagine something as simple as this: tourists turn up for two months of the year, make one hell of a mess between Christmas and New Year and after two years we still have not even got a plan about who empties the rubbish bins. We have not sorted out who pays for the toilet paper. We have not got anyone prepared to take responsibility for the public open spaces and the rotundas and those essential community assets.

The people of the alpine communities will need to be on watch. They will need to keep an eye out. They will need to be careful of the tax and charge implications. Will the locals be targeted to pick up the bill for lack of funding, lack of support and lack of genuine commitment by this government to create an entity that on paper makes sense? It is a good idea to strategically manage our alpine communities, but it is not a good idea to create a highly politicised body that may serve to undermine the local community, disregard the needs of business and disregard the needs of real traditional owners who operate in the area and that want to have some input into that, not the political machines in Melbourne that are driving greater agendas. A single authority to manage our alpine resorts has great potential, but I fear for them greatly, based on the examples this government has led, such as with the Great Ocean Road.

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (12:32): I also rise to speak on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This government is obviously committed to protecting and enhancing Victoria's tourist destinations, and this bill is a clear example of this. Victoria is home to some of the greatest tourist destinations in the world. Whether it is the alpine region, the Great Ocean Road, as was mentioned quite a few times in that speech—

Mr Edbrooke: Or Frankston!

Mr BRAYNE: or Frankston, as the member for Frankston points out, or the Mornington Peninsula just south of Frankston, our state truly is one of the best places to come and visit. That is why legislation that protects and enhances our tourist destinations is so important.

As a member in an area with high tourist rates, I understand the importance of tourism to my electorate's local economy. So many businesses in my community rely on increased visitation to the peninsula to run their small business or receive more work over the busy holiday periods in order to get through the less busy winters. A strong summer season is critical for the Mornington Peninsula as a strong winter season is critical for the alpine regions.

Unfortunately of course, like everything, COVID-19 has had such a big impact on the businesses on the peninsula who are so reliant on tourism. Our local businesses have done it tough over the past two

years. From decreased visitation to staffing shortages, they have had to deal with so many challenges, and yet despite the failings of our country to prepare for the eventual complete opening up with a suitable amount of rapid antigen tests, this summer was still a bumper one. Many people enjoyed the ability to get out and about, with the businesses I have spoken to having reported good earnings. Maybe it is just my days at the Dromana drive-in—another business reliant on visitation, on top of the many locals who love that icon—but I personally love seeing everyone down on the peninsula, because it usually means that it is summer. And if it is summer, it is the best time of the year.

But for some the winter season is the best time of the year. Some people actually like going outside when it is freezing cold and trudging around in snow—many people in fact. Our alpine resorts are heavily visited, not just by those living in Victoria but by many interstate and international visitors. On the few occasions—and I note ‘few’—I have visited alpine regions for the snow season, many of the tourism facilities were staffed by international snow-loving visitors. With the Winter Olympics having just drawn to a close, it is an apt time to talk about our alpine regions and what we can do to better manage them.

Victoria is home to four alpine resorts that cover six mountains: the Southern Alpine Resort, the Mount Hotham Alpine Resort, the Falls Creek Alpine Resort and the Mount Buller and Mount Stirling Alpine Resort. Each one has its own unique characteristics that make this region such a special place for people to visit. Each one of these resorts also has many businesses around the resort that are directly connected to a good season and high visitation to the resort, whether that be the restaurants, the ski hire shops, the supermarkets or the many other businesses. Quite opposite to the Mornington Peninsula, as I said earlier, all of these businesses need the resort to have a bumper season in the winter to get through the less busy summer.

While the resorts are tremendous drawcards for many, this region is facing many challenges. For one, it is expensive to establish and maintain tourist infrastructure, especially when most of the region’s tourism occupies a small window each year. As mentioned by many of the other speakers who have spoken on this bill, climate change is also having a huge, significant impact on the region, changing the nature of the snow season and increasing the threat of bushfires. The bushfire season over the 2019–20 summer was absolutely devastating for the alpine region and compounded the difficulties that many had with continuing insurance given the reticence of insurers to support those resorts.

Finally, the pandemic has also affected the region, as it has affected all regions, with many of the issues that affected the Mornington Peninsula also impacting the slopes. The pandemic was just devastating for these alpine regions given that the lockdowns were mostly in place during the winter seasons. Fortunately for areas like the Mornington Peninsula the summer business seasons were never overly impacted by the lockdowns, but of course during the winter this was devastating for the resorts. The resorts were forced to refund passes already purchased, further devastating these businesses.

The combination of all of these issues has presented a real challenge to the individual boards of the alpine resorts. As such, it is important that we are thinking ahead and doing what we can to support the governance of this important part of our state. That is why it is time to reform the governance of our alpine regions.

I will now turn to the specifics of this legislation. This bill proposes to abolish the individual resort management boards and the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council and bring them all together under one organisation, Alpine Resorts Victoria, or ARV. There are five key aims of the proposed reforms, which include financial stability and improving the economic viability of the alpine resorts, modernising governance to improve transparency and accountability, strengthening long-term climate mitigation, improving efficiency through greater coordination and COVID-19 recovery and improving resilience.

In order to achieve these goals the Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997 will be amended. In addition to this amendment the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning will be

working with stakeholders to develop an operating and financial model as well as a transition plan to ensure that ARV is sustainable. The creation of ARV is a significant step for the alpine region that will see this tourist region better governed and in turn better enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

However, for these improvements to be made, ARV will have to consider the following principles alongside the existing activities that the current boards undertake. These principles include protecting the unique characteristics of each alpine resort; planning for and managing all alpine resorts in a coordinated manner; responding to the impacts and risks of climate change; considering the ongoing impacts of the use of the resorts on natural and cultural features; respecting, protecting and promoting Aboriginal self-determination; partnering with traditional owners in policy development, planning and decision-making; protecting and enhancing the amenity and access of each alpine resort; and promoting investment in a diverse range of tourism and recreational experiences. These principles are varied but are all necessary to protect and enhance the alpine region. These principles also include economic characteristics which include the financial and economic contribution of the private sector.

Furthermore, the protection of the region's ecology and ensuring that the effects of climate change are accounted for are also key principles which must be considered. Finally, this legislation acknowledges the unique connection that the traditional owners of the land have with country, and it is a commitment of ARV that it will work with these groups to protect the alpine region. Respecting, protecting and promoting Indigenous cultural values, practices, heritage and knowledge is so important, and this government is committed to doing just that.

The reforms outlined in this legislation also require ARV to have a skills-based board that covers various areas of expertise, including alpine environments, activities and tourism, financial management and economic development, natural resources management, cultural knowledge and authority from experience as a traditional owner of land in alpine resorts, environmental conservation, and public administration and governance. Given the broad range of skills that this legislation mandates, ARV will have a stronger strategic purpose and will be well placed to achieve the principles set out earlier. Overall the combination of ARV's principles and areas of expertise will go a long way to protecting and enhancing the alpine region for many years to come and assisting it to bounce back from this really, really difficult period of time.

This bill will see this tourist region reformed and better able to deal with the challenges it is facing. Meanwhile locals and visitors alike will still be able to go out and enjoy Victoria's best slopes as we get back to doing what we all love. There will be no loss of resort operations jobs, with the number of frontline operational roles across the resorts being maintained and staff supported during the transition to the new entity. The bill also includes transitional provisions to ensure that all existing staff of the alpine resort management boards will become employees of ARV on the same terms and conditions and with no break in service. This will also extend to non-executive staff members of an existing alpine resort management board, who will be employed on the same terms and conditions as they are currently under.

This legislation will help protect and enhance one of Victoria's best tourist destinations. This bill is another example of the Andrews government's proud record of protecting our natural treasures. I am committed to upholding our state's reputation as a global tourist destination, including the Mornington Peninsula. I am proud to say that I support this legislation. I commend it to the house.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (12:42): If I were not in the chamber, I would be saying right now, 'Let's have a big round of applause for the member for Nepean'. He is an absolute hard worker, a legend in that community. As the member for the gateway to the Mornington Peninsula I often hear from people living on the Mornington Peninsula or people who are tourists down there, and he gets a very good rap. He is a very, very hard worker as well.

I rise today to speak on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I guess my experience with these areas is somewhat clouded by my career and my work, which has taken me to these areas,

but I will get to that a little bit later. Importantly, as has been spoken about previously, we are talking about a land that has a certain culture and a spiritual connection to people in our community, so I want to acknowledge the close cultural and spiritual connection to Victoria's alpine country maintained by Victoria's first peoples. Groups with formal recognition and registered Aboriginal party status over the areas of these six alpine resorts we are talking about are, and please excuse my pronunciation, the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, the Taungurung Land & Waters Council and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. There are some other groups that care and have connection with the Victorian high country. They are the Dhudhuroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation and the Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation.

It goes without saying that people who own businesses in these areas do it tough. Whether it is fires or whether it is COVID, it has been quite tough for them, and I think what this legislation brings to them is a coordination and a better regulated response, which is more efficient. We have heard members across the chamber speaking about that and the need for that over the years.

This bill will abolish the four alpine resort management boards—namely, the Falls Creek board, the Mount Hotham board, the Mount Buller and Mount Stirling board and the Southern board—and the coordinating council for the alpine areas as well. The bill establishes Alpine Resorts Victoria (ARV) as a statutory body corporate to govern all alpine resorts with functions and powers commensurate with the existing boards, so we are establishing that Alpine Resorts Victoria authority. The bill will modernise and strengthen governance arrangements, including through the establishment of a skills-based board.

The bill provides for legislative recognition of the traditional owner connection to the alpine country and places obligations on ARV to engage and involve traditional owners in decision-making for resorts. I stand here as a very proud member of this government, who are pushing ahead with the nation's first treaty process for our traditional owners—people that have been here for over 60 000 years. Sovereignty was never ceded. As an elder put it to me quite recently, 'Paul, everywhere you stand in Frankston there was probably an Indigenous baby born there, so you need to tread gently and respect that as well', and I certainly do.

My relationship with Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula is, I think, very well known. I am a huge advocate for that area. We have got tourists coming back. It is fantastic. I am very at home where there is a beach, but the second place I love is the High Country—the solace. I am even booking something at the moment. There is a little hut in one of those areas that is out of the way; it is not connected to any power. To just get away up there for 24 hours would be quite magnificent.

Mr Halse: Off the grid. Fantastic.

Mr EDBROOKE: Off the grid. That is right. My connection with that land has basically been through fires. With a couple of people I work with we made a pact to go back when these areas have regenerated and give to those businesses.

Ms Green interjected.

Mr EDBROOKE: Yes, firefighter Allan from Frankston; fire officer Allan these days—he is a legend. With a mate of mine I have made a pact to go back to these places—we did that after Black Saturday in Marysville, Kinglake, Kinglake West—and make sure that we contribute to their economy as tourists, because unlike what we heard from one particular member, tourists are not there to just mess up the place, throw rubbish around and make a job for the local councils. Tourism is the main economic development contributor to these communities, and they rely on it, just like we have heard many businesses on the Mornington Peninsula do.

One of the most exciting things I have done was not riding horses up there, as the member for Tarneit has done, but a bit of downhill mountain biking. I was a keen dirt bike rider, motocross rider, for some time. I think it is a case that the older you get the better you were, and I like to talk about that in those

terms. But I did a bit of mountain biking—cross-country, downhill—until I came off, and I came off quite badly. Lots of people around me were laughing, but I could not laugh; I was quite sore. So I went to the doctor up there. I got in. It was a typical country doctor. It reminded me of *A Country Practice*: you walk in, you wait—lovely people at the front desk. And they had seen this a million times before: some young smart Alec with a mountain bike comes up and takes a spill in the first 5 minutes. I said to the doctor, ‘Look, I’m a bit sore here’, and he said, ‘We’ll get you some X-rays and everything’. He said, ‘How long have you been mountain bike riding?’ I said, ‘A little while—got the muscles going, I’ve been riding bikes and all that kind of stuff’. He looked down at my quads and he said—

Mr Richardson: Beast.

Mr EDBROOKE: He did not say ‘beast’, member for Mordialloc. I quote this doctor: ‘Junior, I’ve seen more meat on a butcher’s pencil. So you can continue mountain bike riding around here or you could take up another hobby, one with a motor maybe. You’ll have just as much fun, and you probably won’t have to come back and visit me’. It is like the old stories we have heard of country doctors and country police officers: they always steer you in the right direction. I sold that mountain bike for a loss, but I did feel that his advice was probably for the best. I have never had a chance to actually tell that story and say, ‘I’ve seen more meat on a butcher’s pencil’. I had never heard that before. But, yes, I have not skipped leg day since.

Back to the bill, though. It is quite obvious that everyone in this chamber has a passion and a commitment to the High Country. I heard the member for Warrandyte’s contribution—we throw a couple of sticks and stones across the chamber at times, but I think there is a mutual respect—and it made sense. I think this bill does follow on from some work of successive governments to ensure that the boards that are regulating businesses up there and driving that tourism are synced and have a common goal and are not working against each other. I have heard a little bit about that today. I would not go out there and say I know anything about that, but certainly we know that, especially when times are tough—with fires, COVID, whatnot—it is efficiency that keeps these businesses afloat. If they can drive the dollar further in the good times, it means they can outlast the bad times, which we know they need to. The good times up there will be many and varied in the coming years. We need these areas where these previous boards have been to be working together. They are very unique areas, but when they work together we will get the best outcome. I think that is what this bill is about.

Again, it is very, very important that we highlight that the establishment of the board, Alpine Resorts Victoria, takes into account and partners with the traditional owners in policy development, planning and decision-making. Also, the establishment of Alpine Resorts Victoria will achieve the savings and efficiencies that I have previously spoken about through that improved coordination and through the efficiencies of scale and reduction and duplication. It will build a capability to undertake integrated strategic and sector-wide planning for the common challenges that these unique areas face. There are common challenges. Those challenges include issues associated with climate change and helping the sector recover from COVID and bushfires.

I think everyone in the chamber knows I am a huge advocate for tourism on the peninsula, as I think everyone would be. I love the beach, but you cannot beat some of these areas. I pay my respects to the MPs who are travelling in and who represent the people in these areas, because they are huge areas and there are lots of opinions to take on board. I would also like to congratulate the minister and the minister’s staff on this great bill, which I commend to the house.

Mr HALSE (Ringwood) (12:52): It is a pleasure to get up and speak this afternoon after the member for Frankston on this bill, the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. There has been some really interesting discussion about the Victorian High Country, the experiences that people have had in our Victorian High Country and the extraordinarily unique landscape, topography and geography that are in the Victorian High Country, one of the great regions of our state. It demonstrates the great diversity of our state that you can be skiing down a double black diamond on Mount Buller

one day and surfing on the coast on another, such is the great diversity of our natural environment here in Victoria.

I would like to thank the minister for bringing this bill before the chamber today. I think the minister—just on a brief tangent that is applicable to this bill—has had a good week because she has demonstrated the real importance of the action that the Andrews Labor government is taking on climate change, and that intersects really clearly with the bill before us right now and the impacts that climate change, as some have noted during their contributions, global warming and added pollution in our environment will have on the High Country and the viability of the High Country. So this bill right now before the house is timely, and it is another example of the minister's foresight as we continually seek to tackle climate change here in Victoria and we continue to be a leader in this space.

I want to highlight just a few key elements of the bill that have been traversed widely throughout the course of this debate. It is good to see that the opposition is supporting this bill. Then I want to reflect on some personal experiences in the High Country recently and some of the really fine contributions from members in the chamber. But as has been noted, this bill is for the establishment of the brand new Alpine Resorts Victoria body, which will replace the current system of four separately operating alpine resorts with one cohesive body. This renewed governance scheme will strategically and more holistically respond to the sector's financial and climate change-related challenges. Specifically the bill will abolish the existing four alpine resort management boards—Falls Creek, Mount Hotham, Mount Buller and Mount Stirling—and the Southern board, which manages Lake Mountain and Mount Baw Baw.

As we have heard through the course of the debate, there have been some fond memories of people going up and getting on the skis or on the snowboard and enjoying our great High Country. I am sure the member for Mordialloc probably jumps up occasionally and has a go on the sliders and heads down and has a go at the black runs up at Mount Buller or Mount Hotham. Many of us have enjoyed the alpine region. Just over the summer break I had the opportunity to get up to Bright and travel through that area of the world. I tell you what, it is a beautiful area through Myrtleford, and then you get to Bright. I got on the bike and did some riding up to Mount Beauty.

Mr Edbrooke interjected.

Mr HALSE: I did a bit of quad work, yes—I think that was the comment from the member for Frankston. It is a beautiful area of the world. Pick a season and there is a reason to be in the Victorian High Country.

Ms Crugnale interjected.

Mr HALSE: For every season there is a reason—yes, that is right, member for Bass. But I just want to touch upon some of the really important things that are being incorporated into this bill. There is a focus on making sure that there is a really strong First Nations voice, and I know that many speakers here have commented on that. I have just got with me here—he is a controversial figure, or has been made into a controversial figure—Bruce Pascoe's new book with Bill Gammage called *Country*. It talks about fire and it talks about the natural landscape and the embedded knowledge of our First Nations people in managing and advising on and protecting and being the stewards of a land that is ancient that they have been the custodians of for tens of thousands of years, and that that language is embedded into this bill I think is deeply important. It is not just a throwaway line in a piece of legislation, it actually goes to what we as a government are about: making sure that we acknowledge our First Nations peoples, our First Nations comrades, and their unique place with managing the natural resources and the environment right across our state. I am very pleased that that has been drawn upon. The member for Oakleigh made that point in a significant way.

I noticed that the member for Box Hill also spoke about the recent Winter Olympics and noted the silver medal winning snowboarder Scotty James, who is from my patch of the world. He used to train at a gym just a few kilometres from where I live. He is a tremendous Australian athlete. It has been

the most successful Winter Olympics team that Australia has ever had. That shows the passion, particularly here in Victoria, for snow sports. We are the centre of snow sports here in Australia, and that is why we need a management system and a board system that appropriately responds to the challenges that are before us right now and that will confront us right into the future. He also spoke about taking the kids up to have a go on the slopes.

Sitting suspended 1.00 pm until 2.01 pm.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. Noting Probuild’s parent company has directly cited the lack of policy consistency—directly citing lockdowns and internal border closures—as a key reason why thousands of jobs are now threatened by their withdrawal from Australia, I ask: what is the government doing to ensure that more companies, particularly in our construction sector, will not shut up shop, risking thousands of jobs because of two years of crippling state government COVID restrictions?

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:02): On this side of the house we are saddened by this news today in relation to Probuild’s parent company, Johannesburg-listed Wilson Bayly Holmes-Ovcon, placing that company in administration. I do note the comments that the parent company made and that I think related to Australia right across the board, not specifically Victoria. As a government we are monitoring the situation. We are working with the company to protect jobs and their workers. It is our expectation that the company will honour all legal obligations to workers and subcontractors.

I think the important thing to note here is that this government has got a record construction agenda happening right here and right now, and it did not just start yesterday. It started when we were elected in 2014 after four years of lethargy from those opposite. As a government we have invested heavily in the construction sector, building the things that people are looking for.

Mr Guy: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I note the minister is talking about publicly funded infrastructure. I asked a question about private sector jobs, and I ask you to bring him back to answering that question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on my right will come to order. The minister is being relevant to the question that was put to him.

Mr PEARSON: Thank you, Speaker. I would have thought the workers were just happy to have a job. I would have thought if you were a worker, you would just want to get employed regardless of if it was a private project or a public project. I mean, it is just a ludicrous statement from the Leader of the Opposition.

The reality is the construction sector in Melbourne is booming. The CommSec *State of the States* report last month showed construction work in Victoria was 21.9 per cent above its decade average. It was ahead of Tasmania, which was up by 21.6 per cent; South Australia, up by 21.3 per cent; and New South Wales, up by 1.1 per cent—1.1 per cent. We have got a very proud track record of getting on with the job of building this state with our Big Build, be it the Metro Tunnel, be it our Level Crossing Removal Project or be it schools and hospitals and police stations right across this state. Look, this is a sad day for the workers involved, but I would hope that the company will honour all its legal obligations.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:04): Given the reported precarious nature of a number of major construction firms in Victoria at the moment, arising from two years of crippling COVID restrictions, can the minister—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House! When the house comes to order. In particular I ask for the assistance of those at the table.

Mr GUY: Given the precarious nature of major construction firms in Victoria at the moment arising from two years of crippling COVID restrictions, can the Assistant Treasurer advise why the government is increasing taxes on the development and construction industries at a time when they are so clearly struggling?

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:05): I think the only thing that is precarious in this state is your leadership, mate. You are struggling, absolutely struggling.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Assistant Treasurer! When the house comes to order. Just before calling the Manager of Opposition Business, I warn members: the rowdy nature of question time means that members will be removed from the chamber without further warning.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, question time is not an opportunity to attack the opposition, and that is what the minister was doing. Could you ask him to come back to answering the question?

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. The minister to come back to answering the question. The minister has concluded his answer.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (14:06): I rise to update the house about how the Andrews Labor government has opened schools and is keeping them open. I know the opposition hate hearing that, but while those opposite have been desperately hoping that schools are shut so they can make some cheap political points, the Andrews government has been putting in place the measures to keep schools safe and open. We promised to deliver 51 000 air purifiers before the start of term this year, and that is exactly what we have done. At the same time we established an expert technical advisory group to look at what more we can do.

The key issue is that natural ventilation levels in schools will drop as winter comes and doors and windows are closed more often, making rooms that are currently low risk higher risk. That is why we announced the delivery of a further 60 000 air purifiers before winter, bringing the total number to 111 000—all classrooms in all government and low-fee non-gov schools. That compares to just 10 000 purifiers in New South Wales and next to nothing everywhere else. Our air purifiers complement a suite of measures all based on public health advice: 39 million rapid antigen tests, 30 million face masks, mandating third-dose vaccines for school staff, and vaccinations for 5- to 11-year-olds. And on that, let me remind everyone that the national child vaccination program is the responsibility of the commonwealth government—but you would not know it. Last year we stepped in to fix the commonwealth's shambolic vaccination program, and now we are having to do it all over again with our kids. We are running statewide pop-up vaccination clinics. There are grants for primary care providers in hundreds of schools. While those opposite are cheering on the coronavirus we are doing everything we can to keep— *(Time expired)*

SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (14:08): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. An extra \$20 000 in state government tax on top of a house and land purchase price of \$710 000 adds \$113 every month for the

life of a 30-year mortgage. That is \$40 881 extra on the average home loan. Can the minister explain to Victorian first home buyers why it is government policy to force homebuyers in areas like Casey, Cardinia, Wyndham and Melton to pay so much more at a time they can least afford it?

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:09): I reject the premise of the member's question. I suspect that the member has probably spent the last 24 hours trying to work a calculator to get to that point. Look, the reality is as a government—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I just remind members that they have been warned they will be removed from the chamber.

Mr PEARSON: I do not accept the premise of the member's question. There are a couple of things I would say. With the package of reforms that has been devised, what was being proposed was billions of dollars of commercial benefit to developers—\$7 billion over 10 years. In return we asked the developers to make a modest contribution in the millions for social housing—in the millions. Now, on this side of the house we have done more for first home buyers in this state's history than anyone else. This government have invested heavily to provide the grants for first home buyers. Last year more than 51 000 people received stamp duty concessions or exemptions worth \$896 million, and more than 21 000 people received home owner grants worth \$275 million. So what does that mean? In 2021 alone we have provided support to first home owners in the order of \$1.1 billion—\$1.1 billion.

So I do not accept the premise of the member's question. We have come forward with a package of reforms to try and basically say to developers, 'If you are in a position where you have got super profits, we are asking that you make a modest contribution to provide affordable housing for people who, for example, are fleeing family violence, for Indigenous Victorians, for migrants, for refugees'. It is a fair proposition, and I reject the premise of the member's question.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (14:11): Yesterday the Premier said the future of this tax proposal was uncertain. Then in question time the Assistant Treasurer said the tax was 'a matter for the Parliament' and was being reconsidered and then blamed the property council for its problems. Victorians who are saving to purchase a new house and land package want some certainty. Does the government intend to proceed with this new tax or not?

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:12): Look, the government has worked with the sector and engaged with the sector in good faith. You cannot just pick and choose reforms, you have got to consider the whole package. In light of recent comments, as a government we are considering our position.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: MAJOR EVENTS

Mr PAKULA (Keysborough—Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Trade, Minister for Business Precincts, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Racing) (14:12): Yesterday I was delighted to announce the launch of Always Live, a festival of music that will open with Dave Grohl and the Foo Fighters playing at Kardinia Park next Friday night on the same night that Amy Shark plays at Rod Laver Arena. It will come hot on the heels of the opening of the Melbourne Fashion Festival the previous evening at the Queen Victoria Market, and on the Saturday night the Oils will be lighting up Mount Duneed Estate, followed by shows at Rod Laver Arena and in Wahgunyah.

From there we will roll into the festival of footy, with the AFLW and every Victorian AFL team playing in Melbourne in round 1. Fabulous Flemington will host Super Saturday and the All-Star Mile, and while Moomba is crowning its monarchs, Her Majesty's Theatre will be raising the curtain on Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*, Bendigo Art Gallery will be welcoming visitors to *Elvis: Direct*

from *Graceland* and Nigella Lawson will be headlining the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival. A few days later Formula One returns to Albert Park.

So, fashion, Foo Fighters, food and wine, footy, Flemington, fur shows and F1—it will be freaking awesome. And those opposite, who have spent months talking the joint down, barracking for us to fail and doing Sydney’s bidding, get a big ‘F’ too—flops and failures, flailing and floundering while we get on and bring this state back to life.

SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:14): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. In responding to the government’s proposed legislation to exempt themselves from paying local government rates on residential properties they own, Ballarat Mayor Daniel Moloney said regional councils cannot recoup those losses in any way other than by raising rates. How is it fair that Ballarat ratepayers will have to pay higher rates because the Andrews government intends to exempt themselves from paying rates on their own properties?

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:14): What is being proposed is: we want to put more funding into social housing to support the most isolated and disadvantaged members of our community. In terms of the cost, if you look at the rate base of the City of Ballarat relative to the number of social housing dwellings, the imposition is minimal. This is about making sure that we provide the necessary investment for the most isolated, vulnerable, disadvantaged members of the community, and it is consistently opposed by those opposite because they do not care. They do not care about the victims of family violence. They do not care about refugees or migrants or Indigenous Victorians. These are important, necessary reforms to create a great society, to create a just and fair society, and it is the right thing to do.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:15): The Bendigo city council have said that they will either raise residents’ rates or cut services to make up for the loss of revenue. Why should residents of Bendigo have to have a cut in council services such as libraries or maternal and child health care to make up for the shortfall in revenue from the Andrews government not paying rates on their own properties?

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:16): I am advised that the cost is equivalent to about \$6 per household per year starting in 2025. I think these are very modest impositions because of the greater social good that is created by supporting our public housing and our social housing tenants.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: CREATIVE INDUSTRIES SECTOR

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:16): I am delighted to update the house on how our creative industry sector is roaring back to life and putting Victoria centre stage as the cultural capital of Australia. Thanks to every Victorian who has gone and got themselves vaccinated, we are open and the wonders of late summer and autumn are here for all of us to savour.

Here is just a selection of what has been proudly supported by the Andrews Labor government. The NGV *Chanel* exhibition is stunning and is on until 25 April. There is lots more to see and do at the NGV, including the wonderful *Bark Ladies* exhibition, so come down and join the more than 350 000 visitors who have visited since November. Our On the Road Again busking and live music program is a treasure trove, with over 700 buskers and live shows popping up in every corner of the state. Do not miss the glorious Lin Onus exhibition, *The Land Within*, at the Shepparton Art Museum—it closes on 13 March. Victorian Opera’s production of *The Who’s Tommy* is now on at the Palais, and dance lovers get ready because the Australian Ballet’s *Anna Karenina* premieres tomorrow.

But wait, there is more. *Triceratops: Fate of the Dinosaurs* opens at the Melbourne Museum on 12 March, and this will be enormous. Melbourne's fashion festival begins on 3 March. The Melbourne International Comedy Festival starts at the end of March, and Melbourne Design Week is on in March too. The Blak & Bright First Nations literary festival celebrates fantastic First Nations writers from 17 to 20 March, covering all genres from oral stories to epic novels and poetry. The Leader of the House and the member for Bendigo West are all shook up that *Elvis: Direct from Graceland* begins at the Bendigo Art Gallery on 19 March, and RISING comes alive in June—full of art, music, performance and ceremony in the heart of Melbourne. Victoria is vaccinated, we are open and Victorians are making the most of all there is to offer across our creative state.

HERITAGE PROTECTIONS

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:18): My question is to the Premier. Premier, over the past few years Melbourne has lost many of our iconic cultural venues and buildings; for example, the Palace Theatre, the Princess Mary Club and more. Now we are potentially about to lose two more, with the Nicholas Building in the CBD and the Curtin Hotel in Carlton both up for sale, likely to be turned into apartments. The Nicholas Building is unique in that it houses many artists and creative businesses. The Curtin Hotel is an iconic live music venue and pub. Other organisations, including the council and philanthropists for the Nicholas Building and unions for the Curtin, are willing to contribute significant funds and support to buy these buildings and stop them being turned into apartments, but they will need some state government support to make it happen. Premier, will the state government commit funds to help buy both these iconic heritage buildings?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:19): I am very pleased to receive this question from the member for Melbourne. First of all let me make very clear that with the greatest of respect—and I am indebted to the member for Melbourne for conveying messages from the mighty trade union movement—having been down at Trades Hall just last week officially opening, with my honourable friend the Minister for Planning and essentially for heritage as well, the second stage of the redevelopment and the restoration and the historic protection of that symbol of fairness, I am only too well aware of the views of the union movement. Again, with the greatest of respect I do not necessarily need the help of the member for Melbourne to understand what the rest of the labour movement thinks.

The second point I must make surely: if I heard the question correctly, the member for Melbourne is essentially asking me on behalf of the government to commit to the John Curtin Hotel. John Curtin of course was a great Australian Prime Minister. Prior to becoming a great Australian Prime Minister he was of course the state secretary and national president of the timber workers union. It just goes to show: if you stand in one place for long enough, you never know what will pass by. But I tell you what we will not let pass by, and that is the celebration and the protection of our heritage.

In many different ways, over not just the last four or five years but many decades, we have seen many historic buildings—and many of them repurposed actually, and repurposed with the best of intentions and the best of outcomes—fall away because they have not been appropriately maintained, fall away because they have been fundamentally neglected, fall away because they have not been valued. We have got a very different approach, and that is why upon coming to government we made a commitment of a \$60 million Living Heritage program—not \$6 million, \$60 million. That funds over 165 conservation projects, and 100 of those—in fact I think more than 100 of those—are now complete. So we are not just talking about it; we are not running messages where none need to be run. Again, the support for heritage is very, very important. Can I say, again with the greatest of respect, there is a global campaign against appropriation—cultural appropriation, legacy appropriation—and I would suggest that getting up here and pretending that John Curtin might have had anything in common with you and the things you stand for might well be to offend those, I thought, universal principles against such appropriation. Heritage is important, not just in words but in actions and deeds, and we have done it and we will continue to do it.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:22): I am not quite sure if that was an attempt to answer the question, but it did not quite answer my question, which was very specifically about two really important buildings in Melbourne that we are about to lose, which the state government can prevent. Looking at the Nicholas Building, if it is sold, which it looks like it is about to be, we will lose an iconic arts and cultural institution that has been with us for 100 years. Nothing else like it exists in the country. The extraordinary economic benefits to Victoria will be lost if these creative sole traders and businesses leave our city. I understand that the City of Melbourne, philanthropists and community organisations are all willing to come to the party in quite a big way if the state government contributes some modest funds to help them purchase the building. Premier, why won't the state government commit these modest funds to save something so iconic about Melbourne's cultural life?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:23): I thank the member for her supplementary question. Ownership and heritage protection are not the same thing. Who owns the building does not suddenly wash away heritage protections that are either at a council municipal level or at a state significance level. Again, I refute this notion that unless it is owned by certain people it is not protected. That is not right. That is not how heritage works. That is not how heritage has ever worked. And as I just indicated—

Ms Sandell: On a point of order, Speaker, I appreciate the attempt, but on relevance, this question was very much about purchasing the building so that it can continue to maintain its current function quite separate from its heritage value, so I ask that the Premier addresses that point.

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand the question, but the Premier is being relevant to the question.

Mr ANDREWS: If the member is suggesting that we ought go out and literally buy up any building where the landlord might seek a different set of tenants—

A member: And a different use.

Mr ANDREWS: or a different use, all of those things, and somehow that is equivalent in any way to heritage protection, (a) that is wrong, (b) it does not make much sense and (c) it would get pretty expensive pretty fast. I am more than happy to ask the Minister for Planning to sit with the member for Melbourne and talk through these serious issues. They are serious. I thank her for raising them, and hopefully we can work together in a spirit of cooperation.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: RURAL AND REGIONAL INVESTMENT

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (14:25): I rise today to update the house on some of the many exciting and innovative job-creating regional businesses that this government is backing to create jobs for the people of rural and regional Victoria. But before I do that, can I take a moment to give a shout-out to the people of the Barwon Health district—their third dose vaccination rates are leading the state at 67 per cent. So well done, Barwon.

It is no secret whatsoever that regional Victoria is booming. Regional unemployment is at record lows. It currently sits at 3.3 per cent, and we know what that means—more than half of what it was when those on the other side were last in government. Our flagship Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund is a key reason for this success. Since 2015 we have backed in more than 11 000 jobs through our fund. We have invested in innovative medical supply businesses like HealthRFID and Care Essentials in Geelong. Now these businesses are ramping up their manufacturing and international exports thanks to support from this government. The expansion of these two businesses alone is creating more than 100 jobs and more than \$6.7 million of additional wages and salaries circulating in the Geelong economy.

And that is not all. Regional Victoria is full of success stories. Luxury international skincare company Rationale is building its global headquarters in Kyneton. In Tongala, HW Greenham & Sons are investing \$50 million to redevelop their meat-processing facility and create 230 new jobs, and in the Goulburn Valley there are more than 150 new jobs with our support at Flavorite and Kalpack.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (14:27): My question is to the minister for consumer affairs. I refer to her media release of 18 February in which she states:

Home buyers are finding it increasingly difficult to enter the market with significant demand and rapid rises in property prices providing more barriers than ever before.

Given the minister made this statement on the very day her government announced a new tax on first home buyers, I ask: exactly how will imposing a huge new tax on Victorian first home buyers make it easier for those finding it increasingly difficult to enter the housing market?

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (14:28): I thank the member for her question about the comprehensive property market review that we are undertaking, because we are reviewing the laws on underquoting. As those on the other side may be aware, we have got a property market that is really hot at the moment, and the amount of complaints about underquoting has been on the rise. As a result what we have done is engage two really significant people in this space: Enzo Raimondo, who is a former head of the REIV, and Carolyn Bond, who is a great consumer advocate. What they are doing is looking at the details around the property review to have a look at the laws that have been in existence since 2016 so that consumers can be assured that we have got the appropriate laws in place to prevent any of this practice.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (14:29): My supplementary is: will the minister's review of the Victorian property laws also extend to the impact of the state government's taxation laws on property, and will the results of this survey be made public?

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (14:29): Look, I am sorry, but this is just a ridiculous question. I would encourage the member to actually do a little bit of work, have a look at the terms of reference and make a contribution rather than just trying to trip this up in political pointscoreing.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! When the house comes to order. Members have been warned already about interjecting across the chamber.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19 VACCINATION

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:30): I rise to update the house on the government's vaccination program right across Victoria. Victorians have listened to the science, they have listened to the experts and they have done quite an amazing thing. Through hard work and through the great commitment, inherent logic, good sense and good judgement of the Victorian community, we have become one of the most vaccinated places anywhere in the world. Not by listening to some—one particular person who of course is not here today, getting paid but not working, one member of this house. He might be in the City of Whitehorse, where 92 per cent of people have got vaccinated. He thinks you should be having horse drugs—that is what he thinks you should be on. But in any event, let us not be distracted away from the great work of Victorians by focusing on the fringe, who are captive to all manner of conspiracy theories and all manner of other rabbit holes, wormholes or wherever they spend their time—

A member: Tin hats.

Mr ANDREWS: Tin hats and all that.

Victorians have done a great job. It was 12 months on Tuesday since the state government first became involved in the commonwealth government's vaccination program. I just wonder where we would be if we had not done literally 50 per cent of the heavy lifting on what is essentially a federal government

responsibility. But again, I want to thank every Victorian who has gone out there and got vaccinated—first dose, second dose. If you have not had your third dose yet, please go and get it. Safe, effective, free, they work, they save lives, they take pressure off our hospital system, they keep us open and they are absolutely essential. To every worker who has been involved in the administration of these vaccines, thank you so much. Again, we have achieved an awful lot, not by division, not by conspiracies, not by playing the politics of these things but by staying united, by working together because, as every Victorian knows, when we stick together we can achieve anything.

UKRAINE

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:32): (*By leave*) I seek to make a brief statement if I can about the situation in Europe. Very briefly, can I just thank, firstly, for its indulgence, the house and say that on Sunday the member for Oakleigh and I, the federal member Bill Shorten and Senator David Van were on the steps of Parliament to support peace in Europe and peace in Ukraine. Noting that the conflict has commenced in that country and receiving in question time updates from my family about bombings that have commenced in that country on civilians, I say to this Parliament, which is one of the few in the world that unanimously passed a bipartisan motion to recognise the Ukrainian famine, particularly with the support of Labor member Matt Viney and me when in the other place—we passed that motion, which was a great reflection on this Parliament and this state, this recognition of Victorians seeking peace and solving conflict like this by peaceful means rather than by military force.

I thank the Parliament for its indulgence, and I just say again on record, to all Australians of Ukrainian and Russian heritage, these matters, while on the other side of the world, deeply affect many Victorians and should be solved peacefully and without any form of conflict.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:33): When the Leader of the Opposition sought leave from the government just a moment ago to make a brief statement, of course the answer was yes. This is something that saddens all of us. Of course in my own local community in the southern part of my electorate there is both a facility for and a significant presence of Victorians of Ukrainian descent. To all of those people who have that heritage as part of their story and their journey to Victoria, our thoughts are with them today, our prayers are with them today. It will be a very, very anxious time—very anxious as they think about what the ramifications will be for their loved ones, for friends and family.

The Leader of the Opposition is right in saying that this Parliament is at its best when we work together, when we come together in a sense of unity and purpose to say, ‘This is wrong. This is an overt act of aggression. This will cost lives. It will cause misery and suffering. It is simply wrong’. It serves no purpose other than, well, whatever warped ideology passes for leadership within the Russian Federation. And I want to take up the point—a point well made by the Leader of the Opposition—that, yes, our thoughts are foremost in many respects with those who have Ukrainian heritage as part of their Victorian story, but of course for those in Victoria with Russian heritage this will also be a very challenging time.

It is good at the end of a sitting week, can I say, where there is all the usual back and forth which is part of a healthy democratic system, that while it is regrettable that we have to talk about these subjects, I am uplifted—I think we all are—by the sense that there is no division here. These matters are very important, and we should be able to as a Parliament call for peace, as a Parliament reassert that peace is the only way, that negotiation and diplomacy are the only way that you achieve good outcomes, and send our thoughts, our prayers, our love and our best wishes to everybody who has already been touched by this conflict and the many hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—more who will be touched by it in the weeks and months to come. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for raising the issue, and I join with him in that sense of unity to send our best wishes to all involved.

Mr Northe: On a point of order, Speaker, just in relation to an unanswered adjournment matter, 6112 from 27 October 2021, to the Attorney-General in the other place about Victoria adopting a

gambling intervention program in our judicial system similar to what exists in South Australia; and a second matter of a constituency question, 6142 asked on 18 November 2021, to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation about what actions the state government is taking with regard to gambling advertising in this state.

Constituency questions

RIPON ELECTORATE

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (14:37): (6226) My constituency question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, who I note is in the chamber. I ask her to review and repeal her recent changes to firewood collection regulations across central Victoria. In my electorate of Ripon I have many people who collect firewood for heating. The borders for these firewood zones are now close to the borders of various places in Ripon, and it means that people can no longer collect firewood in the places where they have collected it for a long time and do not have access to other sources of firewood. These changes I believe came out of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council changes that will phase out firewood collection, and this is the first part of it. I oppose those changes, as do most people in Ripon. I completely oppose this change and ask her to review it.

BASS ELECTORATE

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:38): (6227) My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. What is the latest update on the progress of the work being done at Inverloch through the regional and strategic partnership and any short-term measures planned to protect some of the most beautiful coastline in Victoria? Inverloch has the most aggressive erosion in the state, and I thank the minister and our state government for the \$850 000 in funding that made it possible for the Inverloch regional and strategic partnership to be formed in August 2020 via the Cape to Cape Resilience Project. This project brings together stakeholders and traditional owners on long-term strategies in response to the issues of erosion and inundation facing my Inverloch community, including a local coastal hazard assessment, a coastal risk and vulnerability assessment and a coastal resilience plan. I look forward to the minister's update.

WARRANTYTE ELECTORATE

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (14:39): (6228) The issue I wish to raise today is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. A local constituent has written to me outlining his concerns for the excessive traffic congestion along Wonga Road during peak times. Traffic approaching the Oban Road roundabout frequently blocks vehicles coming out of Hamilton Drive, particularly during school drop-off times. A simple solution would be just to mark a keep-clear zone at this intersection. These markings are cheap and easy to install and would assist enormously in reducing daily angst for those residents who live on Hamilton Drive and on the surrounding roads, such as McMahon Court and Andrea Parade. Will the minister please ensure that this keep-clear zone is installed as soon as possible?

BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (14:39): (6229) My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. How is the government supporting youth mental health in Broadmeadows? I acknowledge the Victorian government has invested more than \$220 million in additional mental health support since April 2020 to help meet demand and ensure Victorians get the care they need during and well beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. I applaud that this support builds on an investment of more than \$3.8 billion delivered in last year's budget, the biggest investment by any state government in Australia's history and a vital first step in rebuilding our mental health system from the ground up and delivering the support Victorians need when they need it, but I just want to draw the minister's attention to the unique set of circumstances in Broadmeadows, with the highest youth unemployment before COVID-19. The government has delivered a number of different projects to try and address this, and I think a particular emphasis on youth mental health is now appropriate.

GIPPSLAND SOUTH ELECTORATE

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:40): (6230) My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. I seek for the minister to explain when there will be action to address the erosion issues at Loch Sport. It is timely that the member for Bass just talked about \$850 000 spent at Inverloch, but at Loch Sport the foreshore on Lake Victoria is in serious trouble with continued erosion there. The minister wrote back to me last year saying that a coastal processes study would be completed by the end of the year as the department tried to work out what it would do about the erosion at Loch Sport. I am aware that this erosion has got worse over summer and is now impacting on the car parks and the council-owned toilet facility in Seagull Drive. The government has been warned about this issue for years and years. There are continuing to be investigations and studies undertaken. It is time for action, and I ask the minister to explain when action will be taken to address foreshore erosion.

NORTHCOTE ELECTORATE

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (14:41): (6231) My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and I ask: what are the next steps in the Preston level crossing removal project? Boots are well and truly on the ground in Preston, and we are seeing remarkable progress towards removing four dangerous level crossings on the Mernda line—at Murray Road, Cramer Street, Oakover Road and the notorious Bell Street. We are bidding farewell to the old train stations, seeing thousands of tonnes of infrastructure craned in to make U-troughs, L-beams, super Ts, steel platforms and concrete slabs—not quite the whole alphabet, but close to it—and when it is complete we will have three MCGs worth of open space, 60 000 square metres of public recreational area that was not there before. There is something for everyone from playgrounds to fitness zones, a barbecue area to a yarning circle and, my personal favourite, a beautiful grassy amphitheatre next to Bell station. We will have safer, more connected and open, modern precincts for everyone to enjoy, and of course more trains more often.

MORWELL ELECTORATE

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (14:42): (6232) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Planning. Minister, what is the latest information with regard to when a decision will be made on the proposed Delburn wind farm. Quite rightly, the proposal was referred to an independent panel, and we understand the minister is now in receipt of the panel's final report. I can say that over time my office has been contacted by a multitude of residents in local communities who have expressed concerns about various aspects of this wind farm, which the minister is aware of. Locals were also very distressed to have observed some recent activity occurring in the subject area, with fears expressed that approval has already been granted by the minister without the community being informed. We cannot afford to have another calamity like the Chunxing battery recycling plant decision in Hazelwood North, where the minister and the government ignored due process and valid community concern by approving that project without fair and just consideration. So we are asking when the minister will make his decision, and will all the information relating to his decision be released publicly?

MELTON ELECTORATE

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (14:43): (6233) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. In November last year the Melton electorate was excited by the announcement that the Andrews Labor government will expand FlexiRide to Melton South following recent success in other suburbs across Melbourne. FlexiRide services do not have a fixed route. Passengers are able to book a seat via the FlexiRide Melton South app or phone, be directed to their closest bus stop—either a physical stop or an appropriate alternative location—and be picked up and transported to dedicated hubs. Four new buses now connect passengers to key destination hubs such as Cobblebank station, Melton station, Woodgrove shopping centre, Melton bus interchange and schools in Melton South and Thornhill Park. The FlexiRide Melton South app provides users with real-time information so passengers know exactly when their service is arriving. This is a fantastic service that helps serve those in Melton South,

especially in the newer parts of the electorate that are not currently served by public transport. I was excited to ride the service myself with the minister last year. Minister, what is the latest information on the usage of this important delivery of public transport for my constituents?

EVELYN ELECTORATE

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:44): (6234) My question is to the Minister for Education on behalf of the Wandin North Primary School community, the students, their families, the principal and the teaching staff. When will you provide sufficient funds for major upgrades at Wandin North Primary School for new buildings to provide modern classrooms, including for science, technology, engineering, arts and maths, a library, disability access and new toilets? Wandin North Primary School's infrastructure currently consists entirely of old portable classrooms. They are no longer fit for purpose for this growing school of nearly 350 students, and they do not provide equal opportunity for students with a disability. Also the toilet block is old—nearly 45 years old. It is full of asbestos. It is not great; I know because I have used it. It is not good enough for the Department of Education and Training to deny proper permanent buildings for Wandin North Primary School, telling them that they have got too many students to do the works. When will Wandin North get these funds?

BAYSWATER ELECTORATE

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (14:45): (6235) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. I rise to ask: what is the latest update on the exciting project at Bayswater West Primary to build the new and inclusive playground I was excited to announce last year? As I put it then, this is a ripper outcome for this fantastic school community and especially for students, who deserve to be able to play on suitable equipment with their mates, because we know every kid, regardless of their ability, deserves as a fair go. Big thanks to Principal Matty Tyndall, who was fantastic to work with to secure this funding on this much-needed project. Of course if you have been around lately, Speaker, you have probably noticed it has been all happening at Baysie West primary, with new toilets, new school grounds and now this exciting project. Not to forget they are part of the groundbreaking Bayswater education plan, which is transforming education locally in Bayswater across five great schools. There really never has been a more exciting time for education in Bayswater, and I am proud to be backing in this great local school. I thank the minister for his consideration of my question.

Bills

ALPINE RESORTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (14:46): I rise today to make a contribution on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I know that many constituents in St Albans absolutely love sport. Whether it is Dylan, who just recently achieved the golden slam at the Olympics last year and made our country very proud, or seeing our athletes during the Winter Olympics this year, it has been really uplifting I think for the local community. I know that I shared many moments with my nephew watching the Winter Olympics, and it was fantastic to see Australia finishing 18th overall, ahead of the UK, and to see many athletes striving for their best, whether it was skiing, whether it was snowboarding or things that I personally probably will never be able to participate in but love watching.

I must admit I am not much of a skier. I have not actually had the opportunity to visit the alpine region or see snow. I will do my very best to take that opportunity in the future to see the great wonders of Victoria and in particular the alpine resorts in the mountains. We have already heard some contributions in relation to the alpine resorts in Victoria, that are spread out over six mountains, each with their own unique character. The southern alpine resorts are Lake Mountain; Mount Baw Baw; Mount Hotham, of course—much more iconic and popular—Falls Creek; Mount Buller; and Mount Stirling. These are real wonders for Victorians who enjoy skiing and visiting the regions.

In Victoria beginners can enjoy a lot of snow play, and of course, depending on your level, it really does cater for all. Whether it is cross-country skiing—much more at the beginners level—or zipping down the blue and black runs, it is an activity for all. We are very much blessed in Victoria to have these very beautiful alpine regions. But we know in the last two years these regions have been facing some challenges and difficulties. We know that the tourism economy has been challenged, and these have been extremely tough times for the tourism industry. We know that it is expensive to establish and maintain the infrastructure. We know climate change is rapidly occurring and changing the nature of the snow, the environment, the space and the threat of bushfires—and the list goes on. I acknowledge the impact of the global pandemic, COVID-19, which has really affected our slopes.

Why do we need this bill? The bill is important to the region because currently individual boards, we know, are doing a great job of managing these issues; however, they are limited to their own little patch. This is why the time is right to reform the alpine regions. This legislation will abolish the individual resort management boards and the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council and bring them together, uniting them together into one organisation, Alpine Resorts Victoria—or the ARV. The key drivers of this reform are, one, financial stability, improving the economic viability of the alpine resorts not just for today but for future generations by bringing together the management to have a whole-of-sector, wraparound focus; and of course modernising governance to improve transparency and accountability.

As many in this chamber have already mentioned, the current legislation is over 20 years old and limits the ability to effectively respond to long-term challenges facing the sector. It really needed a renewal, and that is what this bill will do. It will strengthen our long-term climate change mitigation and planning across the sector in a coordinated way; improve efficiency and remove duplication, and we know duplication is a real, key difficulty for any organisation and any board; and build a whole-of-sector road map—and that is what is needed—out of COVID-19, to improve resilience so we can bring all the tourists back to the region and of course so Victorians can return to the alpine resorts. That is what is most needed, and this bill is part of that process.

The new Alpine Resorts Victoria will also need to consider the following principles. Of course I have already made reference to the unique environmental, social, cultural and economic characteristics of each resort. There is the planning for and managing of all resorts in a coordinated manner and respecting, protecting and promoting Aboriginal self-determination, cultural values, practices, heritage and knowledge in the resorts. This is about protecting and making sure that future generations can actually enjoy and understand the heritage value in our resorts. That is really important. Another principle is—I have already made reference to it, and I think it is one of the most important—making sure that we are promoting investment in a diverse range of tourism and recreation experiences for all seasons. So it is not just limited to a season, it is making sure that Victorians and tourists, whether national or global, are able to visit the regions at any time—whether it is winter, summer or during the Christmas break—to enjoy the activities, to enjoy the hospitality and to enjoy the unique services of the region.

I really do believe that our regions are very important. They are important for jobs and they are important for the economy and for bringing in the tourists. It is up to us all to protect and to invest in these regions. That is why the Andrews Labor government has a proud record of protecting our natural treasures. We have worked hard. We have consulted with the traditional owners, local government, tourism peak bodies, industry peak bodies and stakeholders throughout the region to develop good legislation, legislation for all the alpine regions and, most importantly, legislation advancing the principles that guide this legislation and making sure that the regions are accessible and enjoyed by all throughout the year. As I said, it is great legislation. It had not been renewed for the last 20 years; it is now being renewed for all the alpine resorts. The guiding principles are making sure that we are all able to enjoy the alpine regions into the future. I also want to thank the minister most importantly for being able to consult with all stakeholders to develop this. It is very important. As I said, this is great legislation—legislation that protects, invests and drives the economy back to the alpine regions for us all to enjoy throughout the years, and I commend the bill to the house.

Ms WARD (Eltham) (14:56): Like the member before me I also rise in support of this amended legislation, and I think she concluded her speech very eloquently talking about the investment that is required. It is important to have an integrated strategic sector-wide approach to our alpine areas, particularly in addressing the challenges of climate change. This is incredibly important. Before the minister leaves I would like to also thank her for the work that she is doing, especially with our deer strategy, which I will get to in this speech.

The Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre in a study for the Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council on the potential impacts of climate change on our alpine resorts found the following:

- There is overall consensus around the world that natural snow cover and depth will continue to decline and the length of the ski season contract further as the climate warms;
- Smaller resorts, those at lower altitudes, and those with inadequate snow-making facilities will be the most vulnerable to climate change;
- Snow-making is expected to sustain the ski industry in many regions until the middle of this century using current snow-making technologies;
- By mid-century there will be less natural snow and a significantly increased need for snowmaking at the same time as snow-making opportunities will decline. This may lead to shorter and less reliable ski seasons;
- The economic costs of snow-making are expected to rise as natural snow cover declines, melting and evaporation rates increase and water and electricity costs rise. More snow will need to be made at warmer temperatures, particularly at the beginning of the ski season, at greater costs ...
- The economic viability of snow-making into the future will be determined by the extent of natural snow cover decline and the cost of snow-making required to sustain the ski season.
- The ability of alpine resorts to absorb rising costs will depend strongly on visitor perceptions of climate change and their responses to declining and less reliable natural snow cover.

So you can see how important it is to have a coordinated approach to such a significant challenge to our alpine region and for our alpine resorts to be able to manage the response to climate change in a coordinated way that ensures the ongoing viability of our alpine regions and our alpine resorts.

As I said earlier, climate change is not the only threat to our alpine regions. Introduced species are also wreaking havoc, damage and destruction and also need a coordinated response. This is why I have welcomed the government's deer control strategy. The *Victorian Deer Control Strategy* recognises that deer populations and their impacts have significantly increased in recent years. This is true in our alpine regions. The strategy outlines a process for a strategic and coordinated approach to deer control. Deer in Victoria are having a negative impact on our environment, on agriculture, on Aboriginal cultural heritage and on public safety, and while this is really a problem for our alpine regions, it includes outer suburbia. I have deer in my electorate. I have deer coming into properties in my electorate, I have deer being hit by cars, and I suspect that there are people in this chamber who might be surprised, but there are also people in this chamber who live not far from my electorate who would also have experienced deer in their headlights as they are heading home.

Four species of deer have established populations in Victoria: the fallow deer, the hog deer, the red deer and the sambar deer.

Mr Richardson: Oh, dear.

Ms WARD: Oh, dear indeed, member for Mordialloc. Acting Speaker Richards, here is something for you. This is a fun fact for Friday. It is Thursday, but it feels like Friday. The sambar deer are actually endangered in Sri Lanka. They are an endangered species in Sri Lanka, yet they are in plague proportions here in our state.

Mr Riordan interjected.

Ms WARD: It is incredible. Estimates say that the combined population of the species is between several hundred thousand and 1 million. There is evidence deer are spreading to new areas across Victoria at a rapid rate. Deer impact natural and agricultural systems, and I see the member for Polwarth here, who knows that there are deer in the Grampians as well.

Mr Riordan: The Otways are more concerning though.

Ms WARD: The Otways are also a concern. The deer impact natural and agricultural systems through browsing and grazing on a wide range of vegetation, antler rubbing, trampling, trail creation and wallowing. They ringbark trees—they rub against trees. They destroy so much natural habitat, particularly the natural habitat that our smaller indigenous animals need to survive and thrive. Deer pose a significant risk to biodiversity, having both direct and indirect impacts on native flora and fauna. Deer reduce and destroy native vegetation and compete with native wildlife for food sources.

Mr Riordan: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, on relevance, while I am enjoying the reminiscing and roaming around the beautiful regional Victorian countryside and I appreciate the member's awareness of feral animals in the Otways—deer and pigs, and she could add to that list of course blackberries, ragwort and any number of other pests and pestilence that this government has overseen—we are talking about the alpine bill. When I had the opportunity earlier today to talk about this bill, I was able to compare and contrast the disaster of the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee, which is just wreaking havoc on local communities, and I would appreciate the opportunity for the member, perhaps rather than talking about feral and wild animals around the state, to get back to the point—

A member: What's your point of order?

Mr Riordan: On relevance, I am just helping—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Richards): There is no point of order. The debate has been wideranging, and I will ask the member for Eltham to continue.

Ms WARD: I find it quite surprising that the member for Polwarth would want to call a point of order when I was in a collegiate way recognising some of the challenges that he might have in his community around deer. Yes, this is a bill about alpine regions, and I have referred to the alpine regions quite extensively in this contribution, including the impacts of climate change on alpine regions. The member for Polwarth suggested that the Otways were also a problem. I recognise that that may indeed be true, yet he wants to call a point of order on the fact that I have recognised his contribution towards my contribution. That is a digression, Acting Speaker, and I will continue on with my train of thought—thank you, with your indulgence.

So, as I am explaining, in the alpine regions deer are a significant problem that needs a coordinated approach, and I am explaining the complexity of the response that is needed to the deer problem that we do have that particularly affects our alpine regions. As deer populations increase in an area, the biodiversity decreases. The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation are both seeking to tackle the impacts of deer and other large invasive herbivores at 10 sites in Gippsland and six sites in central Victoria. Impacts of deer at these sites include soil compaction and erosion, damaged native plant species and competition with native species for grazing in grassy, shrubby and herb-rich woodlands.

The objective of the strategy and framework is to prevent new deer species from becoming established in Victoria, including in our alpine regions, remove isolated deer populations and limit the spread of deer to new areas. The strategy creates regional deer control partnership groups to guide the regional deer control plans and their implementation. Partnership groups will comprise local stakeholders involved and interested in managing deer impacts and may include land managers; local government; traditional owners; and conservation, industry and community groups—something that will be much easier to coordinate with the amendments to this legislation that will enable one body to bring together

all of these different groups and help that coordinated response to the challenges that our alpine regions face, such as climate change, such as pest invasion, such as these deer.

An important change that we have made is the decision to declare the deer a pest. This changes land management's ability to control deer by removing the need for authorisation to control them under the Wildlife Act 1975. Ground shooting is the preferred method to control deer, but aerial shooting is now being used where inaccessible and remote terrain, such as in our alpine regions, make ground shooting impractical. More than ever before this is an important program. After the 2019–20 bushfires, removing deer and feral animals from priority fire-affected and adjacent areas to give native plants, plant communities and animals the best chance of recovery was so important. The bushfires had devastating impacts on native species in large areas of habitat. More than ever before the damage that deer do to these areas presents a significant threat to recovery and even survival for native vegetation and animals. As our fire seasons continue to worsen due to climate change this will only become more important. It is something that we need help with for our alpine regions, and I support this amendment to the legislation.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (15:07): It is great to be able to rise on the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and follow a colleague on the former Environment and Natural Resources Committee—

Ms Ward interjected.

Mr RICHARDSON: I was intently listening because I thought it would underpin a large part of this speech in doing so. But I reflect on the significant impacts of deer population—the sambar deer, which I did not know were endangered in Sri Lanka. I tell you what: that was a well-research speech, member for Eltham.

When we think about the position of our alpine communities now, and indeed the important work of the Alpine Resorts Victoria organisation and the coming together of four boards, they are at a critical juncture. That is something I will reflect on in my contribution as well, particularly when we think about the substantial changes to our land, to our communities. We reflect on the hundreds of years before and the huge changes, the substantial damage of introduced species. Some impacts on our biodiversity will never be repaired and it will be impacted in terms of extinction and change to our ecological system, and that is why it is so critically important to have traditional owners contributing to the next journey and pathway.

We are at such a critical juncture for our alpine communities and our usages now. We are right on the edge of some of the most dangerous and destructive impacts of climate change and the impacts of introduced and invasive species, some of which we will not get back. Whether that is deer, whether that is feral cats, whether that is weed varieties, they are in some regions in plague proportions. The committee report that the member for Eltham, I and other members were a part of showed in its recommendations how difficult that approach will be.

All those challenges require a coordinated approach, and bringing together those boards into one in Alpine Resources Victoria is an approach which will be really critical.

Ms Ward interjected.

Mr RICHARDSON: As the member for Eltham says, that is what regional communities are seeking. This is on the back also of an unprecedented pandemic and the impact on those businesses and those communities.

This comes at a critical juncture for setting the policy and the narrative into the future. The legislation previously was 20 years in the making. The board will have such an important role to shepherd this region through into the future and make sure that our alpine resorts, our alpine regions, are dominant into the future. The alpine regions are filled with so much joy for Victorians who get to experience them, whether it is in winter or across the summer months.

I have very fond reflections of different parts of time through there. The 4 Peaks mountain challenge through the alpins that my father-in-law, Brian, does—you would not get me on a bike in lycra for the 4 Peaks mountain challenge, but you will get me in a Hyundai following behind, bringing the water and the Gatorade. There would be no chance at all to get me out on a bike, but you see thousands coming into the townships and really enjoying and appreciating what locals cherish each and every day. It is really pristine country, with some of the most beautiful areas. To respectfully come in and enjoy it for a weekend or enjoy it for a period of time is a real privilege—to put money back into those economies for the welcoming embrace of those local communities who welcome people from all over Victoria and indeed all over our nation. And when we are back to experiencing international travel like we have been, these are some of the areas that people gravitate towards.

There was a time I gave myself a concussion coming down a nice little green run and forgetting how to snowplough at one of these resorts. I left a trail of destruction behind me, including skis and gloves and everything else, but I got to eventually go down a couple of double blacks. That underpinned a trip to New Zealand that is buried deep down; some of those photos could end me as the member for Mordialloc if they ever surface again. But I have lots of great memories. When young Victorians or young Australians can enjoy those slopes and enjoy the wonderful elements of those ski fields and those resorts, the first moment that kids get the chance, if they have not seen snow before, to engage like that and experience that and then go on to learn a little bit about how beautiful these areas are is a really special moment. I know for my family it will be something that I cherish when my little ones get a chance to have a crack on those ski fields.

A member interjected.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, no pun intended. It brings such a great economic benefit to our state. I think it is the \$1.1 billion number that a lot of people have talked about, but it is jobs and it is communities into the future as well. So bringing together that focus and that vision is so very critical.

Also I see one of the key elements and principles that are defining the new board and its work is to look at the broader usages or engagement not just in the three or four months of the ski season. I have mentioned the cycling season as well, but the tourism appeal and the visitor economy through here are all year round, and other things that we can do to attract investment, tourism and business into the future are really so critical. I acknowledge as well the work that has been done to this point by those boards and by those communities to get to this point, but with all the challenges presenting—the huge challenge of climate change—there is action that we need to take.

These alpine resorts, these communities, absolutely know the challenges posed by a changing climate. The risk of bushfires, the risk of less snow in those seasons as well and the risk of more unpredictable weather events are massive challenges. Some of that is at a macro level that requires national policy leadership. There is state leadership like we have seen in our investment in renewable energy and our response to climate change, but when we have a stagnated approach nationally it has huge ramifications that flow on. It is not just when we talk about impacts of climate change on old fuel industries; it has the overflow effect of impacting on tourism. Whether it is in the Great Barrier Reef, whether it is in the alpine regions, whether it is down the member for Polwarth's way on the Great Ocean Road, we all have an investment in making sure that we protect and respect our really beautiful tourism precincts that are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change. That will be a key focus in the work of the board and the new alpine resort principles. One of those will be that guiding principle.

I know the member for Frankston and a number of other members laboured the point around the importance of the involvement of Indigenous communities in promoting Aboriginal self-determination and the work that has been done to this point. It is a really critical element in everything that our government does. We are leading the way in supporting Aboriginal self-determination, respect, reconciliation and treaty, and that is something that at this moment in time in Victoria, while it should have been a long time ago, under the leadership of this government we have made a lot of

ground on, but we have so much more to do. In every element of policy and at every juncture that we have an opportunity to do better, we should strive to do just that. This is another element where we see not just platitudes, not just words, but actions finding their way into statute books and finding their way into policy outcomes. I have seen that across the board in my work as the Parliamentary Secretary for Schools, and to see that as a critical key principle going forward to underpin the important matters before the minister and soon Alpine Resorts Victoria is really encouraging. It is really exciting see at this juncture.

While there are a lot of challenges up ahead, there is also a lot of opportunity. Bringing together the economies of scale of these four resorts into one coordinated board and bringing the different skills and different contributions that members will make is a really fulfilling and important role at this point in time in Victoria's alpine story. I am really excited to see what opportunities present themselves and how this board and the work that they do—in conjunction with the industries, in conjunction with traditional owners and indeed with our tourism sector—can make sure our alpine regions more vibrant and prosperous into the future and continue to support jobs and investment and the visitor economy. I think that can be a shared ambition of this Parliament and something that we all can welcome.

Whether you have had the opportunity and privilege to visit or not, all Victorians would have a knowledge of the alpine region. If they have had the chance to visit, they would have been captured by the beauty and the charm. I have served on committees with these two, the member for Benambra and the member for Ovens Valley. They did have a debate from time to time on whose electorate was the most beautiful. I put up a stern defence for the electorate of Mordialloc, and I still say it is number one ranked, but they are very privileged to serve some of the most beautiful regions, and I include upper house members Gepp and Symes as well in those beautiful communities.

It is a great bill and a great piece of legislation. It has been 20 years in the making, and we look forward to a prosperous and fruitful future for our alpine communities for years to come.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (15:17): I am pleased to contribute to the Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I want to pay tribute to many involved in the organisations across our alpine resorts, particularly off the back of my involvement in parliamentary secretary roles for the environment in the past. For many years there I would attend the opening of the ski season and catch up with the resort management boards, the CEOs, the ski lift operators, the businesses, the ski lodge volunteers and the broader groups on the work that they do in an intense period of work across the snow season. In particular, people like Laurie Blampied, who of course is the ski lifts general manager at Mount Buller, have had a lot of great conversations with me, building my empathy and understanding for the work that is so critical.

With snowmaking the technology is improving, but there is climate change and weather is affecting the number of days available for natural snow to form and also for snowmaking to actually get a grip and a hold in challenging climate conditions. The ski season is fundamentally in the snow depth. It is becoming a shorter season, but at the same time the technology around snowmaking has increased and improved, so there have been these other elements about how to work better to have an economic and fundamental change around how the ski season operates. Part of that is also through investment of some \$7.5 million by the Andrews government to build a new dam at Mount Buller, particularly through some regional development infrastructure investment. I was happy and pleased to be able to work on that project with them, because that was about needing a water source, not only for firefighting and not only for drinking water on the mountain but also for snowmaking. That then brings some certainty for the seasons and future investment from organisations, whether it is around hospitality and businesses or the significant infrastructure around snowmaking.

I was really pleased to work with people like Mark Bennetts, the CEO at Mount Buller Alpine Resort management board (RMB). But also, again, in time, I was also able to catch up with Jon Hutchins, who was the CEO at the Mount Hotham resort management board, on the work they were doing at

Hotham. Each resort management board is really dealing with different offerings for communities. Hotham has its different challenges, particularly around the peaks and the narrowness and the steepness, which appeals particularly to powder hounds, unlike myself, but I can understand the different offering there. They have got the airport nearby. Then you have got over at Buller, close to Melbourne, a range of opportunities around, with Mount Stirling for beginners and engaging with families and school groups—again, a very different offering to Hotham. And then of course there are the other alpine resorts. So you are trying to manage what the spend is for visitors coming in and how to get them to stay longer.

Another element that has been interesting to watch over the years is engagement from governments and from MPs of the Parliament around the opening of the ski season, being involved in that work. But if you are not someone who is familiar with the ski season—it is not a part of your leisure activities or your involvement and engagement, particularly as the cost is significant—it can be pretty intimidating to head up to the snow, sort out what you are doing with chains and the rest of it, find somewhere to stay, get all the gear and work out how to get lessons. There is a lot to it. There is a lot to it if it is not something that you have grown up with, been fundamentally involved and engaged with.

I know a family who have been involved at Benalla Ski Club over a very long period of time, and that has provided some opportunities in more recent years for me to be engaged with that, to have our daughter in the ski school and to understand and be involved in what it is all about—but I think we need to have a greater engagement from members of Parliament and from government around support for the ski season. We need to look back at some of the more traditional arrangements that we had that made it a bit easier for members of Parliament to be engaged and involved in what that means, because even the opening of the season is across a long weekend and there is a lot involved in getting up the mountain. It is not simple stuff sometimes. And while there is a lot of change, I think to have a greater empathy and understanding of the sector there is more we could do to align opportunities for the house and for the Parliament to understand and be engaged in the ski season, what that means for those communities and the economic drivers that it presents for regional communities.

I want to say also that I think these reforms are really important. We know that what we are really seeking to do here is abolish those alpine resort management boards at Falls Creek, Hotham, Buller and Mount Stirling, the Southern Alpine Resort Management Board and the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council. The abolition of those and the establishment of their successor, Alpine Resorts Victoria, really will get them to the point where they are all doing good work. There is duplication and there are points of difference, but ultimately they need to be speaking with one voice. We need to streamline those arrangements and have an effective set-up where what we are seeing is a strategic economic and social values response to how we are going to manage the alpine resource on very significant Crown land. It is a natural environment where development has to be done and maintained very carefully, where we have got huge numbers of people for relatively short periods of time. How do you also unlock the potential of those investments in the summer season? We have heard speakers around those matters and on traditional owners and engagement on land with them across all of the work around embedding traditional owners' voices in our alpine resort governance.

I have seen firsthand the commitment and work from volunteers in ski lodges and the work that they do. I have seen also the absolute commitment from our board members and our executive teams across the RMBs, but I do think it is time to harness and pull those resources together in the way in which this bill outlines. It is a very significant contributor to jobs, to investment in regional communities, to make sure that people are staying and spending their resources across those regional communities, but we need to sharpen it up. We need to learn from what has gone before in how we meet those challenges around climate change, about very significant alpine environments that have challenges in the summer seasons that we try to engage in because of climate change, just as much as the risks that we run around water, and how you manage a built environment in these alpine communities. It is a natural progression; it is a maturing of the sector. It is a piece of work, and I have spoken in plenty of meetings

with alpine resort boards up on the mountain about the challenges that they face and the really good work that they do.

My role as Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers—disability support and access—is to provide opportunities for people, also from low-income communities, and to facilitate arrangements for them to get up to the snow, to spend time on the mountains, and to support them to have a good experience. There is a lot going on in that social justice space too, and I commend those alpine resort boards for their work. No-one is saying the work they have done has not been effective, but this is the next part of the evolution of what we need to do. They should take a lot of credit I think for being on that journey, for helping us to bring forward this reform around Alpine Resorts Victoria. It is going to help secure the future of winter sports, winter tourism, on the mountains and a better protection and advancement of the interests of traditional owners, also with an understanding of, ‘Well, how do we unlock the potential on the mountains through the summer period and do that in an effective way?’.

Certainly some of my experiences have been both at the Benalla ski lodge but also in meeting ski lodge managers, the alpine resort communities, the volunteers that do such great and effective work to maintain a lot of the lodges, the schools and other communities. It has been part of the lives of people for decades and generations, and they work in tandem and in harness with those alpine resort boards. People up there are committed because they are passionate about it and they believe in it. Victoria has a really great offering. But what is also important is to now harness and pull that experience, that expertise and that work, into Alpine Resorts Victoria.

The proof will be in the pudding. The work still needs to be done, but this is a natural progression and a reform that I welcome. It is in part thanks to the really effective work of our resort management boards over a long period of time. I think to speak with one voice, to harness those resources and efforts, is going to bring further benefits to the industry and will sustain it in the face of challenges around climate change as well. I do commend the bill and these reforms to the house, and I look forward to continuing to support and work with our regional communities and our alpine resort boards in this transition. They really deserve these reforms and will do much with them.

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke—Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Youth) (15:27): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

WORKPLACE SAFETY LEGISLATION AND OTHER MATTERS AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms HORNE:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (15:27): I am rising to make a contribution to the Workplace Safety Legislation and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2021. This bill makes a number of changes to a number of acts, including six separate elements related to the workplace safety portfolio, and is another step that this government is taking in Victoria’s nation-leading silica action plan.

The bill aims to improve compensation arrangements for workers with certain work-related progressive injuries or illnesses, including extending the presumptive right to compensation for firefighters with certain types of cancer to those maintenance workers that maintain vehicles on the fireground and are engaged by Fire Rescue Victoria. It will also improve compensation entitlements for family members of workers who have died at work.

At the start I guess I should acknowledge that Labor governments have a proud history in the space of workplace health and safety—in spite of repeated opposition from the other side and scaremongering and pushing back from the Liberal Party. This has not stopped the progress for change that Labor governments have continued in order to make sure that workplaces are safe and healthy environments for working people. Of course we have not finished the job yet; there is still a lot to do, but the legislation we are talking about today continues that upward movement to make places more safe and more healthy. I am proud to be the Parliamentary Secretary for Workplace Safety and to be working with the Minister for Workplace Safety, Ingrid Stitt, and this work continues.

Now, the Cain Labor government—just to give a little bit of history—passed the most progressive and rights-based health and safety laws in Australia, and in fact probably the world, in the 1980s. While the Liberal coalition fought it all the way at the time, when it happened the sky did not fall in, when it was passed by Parliament. But when the opportunity has arisen the opposition have always, when in government, tried to water down the health and safety legislation for workers, whether it was the changes that the Kennett government made during the 1990s or looking at the moves that were afoot under the Baillieu government—but fortunately they were not here long enough to make any of those changes that they perhaps would have liked to have made.

So we continue to build back better health and safety legislation to make sure not only that working people have the strongest protections, they also have rights to take action to ensure workplaces are safe, that the work environment is healthy and that families are given the respect and best possible compensation in cases of fatality and serious injury. Again, I restate that the system is not perfect and the legislation is not always there, but we are continuing on, and the bill that we are talking about today continues to build a better system for working people.

Before going into the details of this bill I would like to acknowledge and say thank you to some of those that have assisted in shaping this bill: first, members of the WICC, the Workplace Incidents Consultative Committee. The WICC is a consultative committee of people with lived experience of workplace fatality or serious injury. It was enshrined in law and is tasked with providing recommendations and advice to the minister. As parliamentary secretary I have the honour of co-chairing this committee alongside Lana Cormie. The WICC has made an exceptional contribution to the shaping of this bill regarding better support for families that have lost loved ones at work, an example of the value that our government places on the ideas, the suggestions and the contributions of those with lived experience. This is a courageous group of people that do this work in the hope that they can make things better, that they can prevent future tragic incidents and devastation to families, because of their experience and their direct knowledge. So in terms of the bill that we are talking about today, the improvements in family supports via these amendments will include improved compensation entitlements for families of deceased workers from as early as 1 July. This is not the end of the work of the WICC, this is only the beginning, but this is an example of some of the contributions they have made to make sure that their voices are heard, that the voices of those families that have lost loved ones are heard and that those with serious injuries are heard.

The changes extend current pensions for children with a disability from the age of 16 to the age of 25 to ensure dependent persons with a disability are eligible for provisional payments following a work-related death, and continued household help services can be received by an eligible person for six months after the tragic loss of life. This will be partially retrospective and allow for eligible dependents who are between the ages of 16 and 25 years at commencement to receive back payments for the period that they would have been entitled to them. The family support benefit changes also allow for the payment of overseas funeral costs following a work-related death, which can cost families tens of thousands of dollars. This is in recognition that many Victorian workers who are not born in Australia may need to be repatriated overseas following their death. This is again an example of the compassion shown in this legislation that really would not have come about except for the contribution made by WICC members. So they are some of the changes to the family support model, and I understand that

there are further things that may not be through legislation but through other areas where there will be continued improvements in support for families.

I would also now like, because I am running out of time, I know—there is just so much that I have got to say about this legislation—to get onto one of the other aspects of the legislation. I thank the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union for raising the anomaly regarding the fire truck maintenance workers who attend and maintain trucks on the fireground but were not included in the original legislation regarding presumptive rights for firefighters in both metropolitan and country brigades. Again, these are examples of the government listening to people in order to make sure that we have a system that is fair and equitable and protects workers that, in going to work, come into all sorts of contact with dangerous things that can create bad health outcomes for them into the future.

The firefighters' presumptive rights will be extended under this legislation to maintenance workers. This continues the evidence-based assertion that if you have contact with certain chemicals and if you get particular types of illnesses, then there is a direct connection between that contact and those illnesses. In this case there is well-known evidence of the types of chemicals that firefighters and maintenance workers on the firegrounds would have had contact with. There are also of course from the Fiskville inquiry that I was involved with the concerns about PFOS and PFOA, and maintenance drivers have a lot of contact, particularly in the past, with washing out trucks and having very direct and long exposures to these sorts of chemicals. In July the Labor government made the firefighters' presumptive rights happen, and I think we are all very aware of that really important and significant piece of legislation. In this bill we are going to ensure that it includes firefighters that are in the maintenance areas and maintaining the vehicles that are on the firegrounds. Therefore no worker working in these areas will be disadvantaged regardless of the fire agency that they are in. We also in the preceding weeks—I am not sure if it was this year or last year—looked at extending rights to firefighters that work, for example, in forests and in national parks.

Another really large and significant area is silica. It was the Labor government that introduced into the industrial diseases schedule illness and death as a result of silica disease from the dry cutting of stone. I am running out of time, but again it was shown that there were some difficulties being posed to workers in their attempts to rightfully apply for compensation for these terrible illnesses. This legislation makes that a little easier and takes out some of the roadblocks to ensure that workers claiming compensation for silica-related disease are able to get it quicker without having to go through some hoops that really ought not be there, particularly when you are so ill and it is a very well-known fact that there is a connection between work and illness. I recommend this bill.

Ms WARD (Eltham) (15:37): I commend the member for her contribution and for her role as chair of the committee we were both on and the work that we did in regard to Fiskville and what we learned about PFAS and PFOA. Her advocacy for the safety of workers in our state has been nothing short of tremendous.

I also support the amendments in this bill. We know, as previous speakers have said, this is the government that is always there to support workers. We are always here to support families, and workplace safety is an issue that is incredibly important to us as the party of the working class, as the party of workers. We know that workplace injury is a serious issue. We know that it happens across many industries, and we are the only party that will do anything about it. We are here for workers, and this includes introducing wage theft laws and workplace manslaughter reforms.

I know that people in this house have heard me talk about my grandmother's first husband before, and with your indulgence, Acting Speaker, I will speak a little bit more about him again. I cannot imagine what it was like for my nan to have someone come to her home, knock on her door and let her know that her husband, who was only 25 years old, had died in a workplace accident. She had a small child, and I cannot imagine how difficult it would have been in working-class East Brunswick to raise a child in the 1930s on your own. My nan was one of 12 children, as many families were at that time. She was the eldest daughter. She was the one who had to leave school at 12 to look after her siblings, which

was a common story in working-class households. My nan had to go out and be a cleaner and manage the care for my uncle. The devastation, the shock of that death, she never got over. Nan, in becoming a cleaner, was lucky in that she met my paternal grandfather at the *Argus* newspaper and got married, had three more children and thankfully had my dad. But Nan never got over it. Nan never forgot that trauma. It never left her, knowing that her husband—she was 22, he was 25—had informed his workplace that the machinery they were using was not safe, had told other people to keep away from it, yet it was that machinery and the log that came from it that crushed him and killed him.

The fact that we know that workplace accidents still happen to this day in this state and elsewhere because of employers not taking the warnings of their employees seriously or not recognising the serious threats to their health and safety is a challenge, and this is a role for government to step into. This is why we have governments that do not just let the private sector rule themselves. This is why we have processes that actually ensure that employers do the right thing, because we know that corners can be cut. We know that profit can be the overarching goal that people are reaching for rather than what is in the best interests of their employees, what is in the best interests of those around them. So we do need government to step in, we do need government intervention. It is foolhardy to say that we do not or to believe that we do not or to believe that the market will always provide, because we know through lived experience, through regrettable lived experience, that the employers do not always provide. That is not to say that there are not good employers out there, because we know that there are. We know that there are employers who do right by their employees and who do right by the workplace. But you still need government, you still need authority and you still need leadership to show how workplaces can be kept safe and to make sure that they are kept safe—and if they are not, that there are serious penalties put in place.

In 2019 we introduced our comprehensive silica action plan in an effort to combat this debilitating illness. This is a workplace injury. This is just like asbestosis—damaging, life-threatening. Silicosis in your lungs kills people. The challenge that many people have got is that when they get silicosis they do not know when it will actually kill them; they just know they will die sooner than they would have. I am glad that we as a government have been at the forefront in responding to this, that we have not been like governments previously, including our federal Liberal governments and our former foreign minister Julie Bishop. We have not pretended that asbestosis or silicosis is not a problem, that it is not something that needs to be addressed. We know it needs to be addressed, and we know we need to do something about it.

Along with an unprecedented compliance and enforcement blitz that focused on stonemasonry workshops to prevent this deadly lung disease, we also introduced a statewide ban on the uncontrolled dry cutting of materials containing crystalline silica dust; a stringent new compliance code for businesses using these materials; an awareness campaign to highlight the risks of working with engineered stone, which has extremely high concentrations of silicosis-causing silica; and free health screening for Victoria's 14 000 stonemasons. This was good policy in 2019, and it is good policy that we are debating now.

We know this surge in demand that we have seen for stone benchtops in Australian homes. I live in Eltham so of course my bench is wood, but we know that many people across our state have loved these stone benchtops, and they can be beautiful. It is terrific that jobs have been created and that we have had a very strong industry, but the unintended consequence of this, where people have not understood or have ignored the dangers that can come with this incredibly fine silica dust, has meant that we have really seen silica numbers rise. We know, as we saw with asbestosis, that people working in this industry, even though we have now put those protections in place, will see ongoing cases of silicosis because it can take time for it to be detected. What is interesting also is that there are industries that are not directly related to stonemasonry, like tunnelling, like quarrying, like manufacturing, where people have also developed silicosis and other forms of silica disease. So we need to put things in place to look after people. We need to put things in place to ensure that people's health needs are recognised and

protected. As other members have said, since the beginning of last year four workers have died from silica-related illness and WorkSafe has accepted around 60 claims for silica-related diseases.

Now, many people who develop silicosis are not old. They should have a long life ahead of them, but they do not know what is ahead of them. Some people in this place might have read of Joanna McNeill, a 34-year-old Australian mother with two children who has been diagnosed with silicosis not because she was a stonemason, not because she was tunnelling but because she worked in an office at a quarry. That is how pervasive this silica dust can be, and I cannot imagine what it is like to walk in her footsteps knowing that she has a time bomb in her chest that could terminate her life at any point. And for someone with young children it must be devastating. The mental and emotional health challenges she must face every day in not knowing how much time she has got left—and I know we all live, you know, not knowing when any of us could, to be colloquial, pop off, but she knows that there is something there that is going to make that happen and that she cannot do anything about it. It is not about putting her seatbelt on. It is not about getting double or triple vaccinated. There are not any preventative measures she can take to stop this disease from occurring in her body, from killing her. Last year she said:

At the moment I am feeling healthy, but I don't know if that will be the case in one year, let alone five or 10 years and as a mum of two young daughters that terrifies me.

And I can imagine how terrified she would be. We know that these people are at risk of psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety, and it is completely understandable that they would be. When you hear what Joanna McNeill is saying you absolutely empathise and you absolutely understand how emotionally devastating this would be.

These amendments will allow workers with silica-related diseases to make a further common law application for damages if they develop a subsequent silica-related disease. They will also extend compensation for counselling services for family of workers diagnosed with an eligible disease. This is incredibly important, and I support the legislation.

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (15:47): It is with great pleasure that I rise in this place and speak in support of the Workplace Safety Legislation and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2021. Can I start my contribution by acknowledging the work of the minister, her team and of course all of the public servants who have helped to craft and put together these significant reforms. There are a number of reforms in this bill of course. It amends a number of acts of this Parliament and really continues a longstanding Labor tradition of protecting workers, making our workplaces safer and making them fairer, not just today and not just tomorrow but for years to come. I think it really speaks to this government's record of continually looking to find ways to reform and to bring workplaces into the 21st century in places where perhaps that is not so and ways we can further improve to make sure that our workplaces are as safe as they can be. Of course this bill helps to address some issues for those who are now living with awful circumstances in their life and provides them with further recourse and support in dealing with those issues as well.

I just want to acknowledge the member for Eltham, who spoke just then in support of this bill. It was wonderful to hear not just from the member for Eltham but from members in this place and of course particularly from members of the Andrews Labor government about their passion for supporting workers in making our workplaces safer places to be. Growing up in Dandenong with the Labor Party mentality and its tradition of being a party of the workers, the party of fairness and the party of equality, is really what drove me at my young age—and particularly a number of the issues while growing up that were important to me and my family—to becoming a Labor supporter and of course a member of the Victorian Labor Party. I am now very proud and honoured to be here and to be able to talk about legislation that improves the rights of workers is a great honour.

This government has proudly reformed, as we promised to do. We criminalised wage theft to the chagrin of many employers out there—I say 'many' but it is a select minority—and that is already making a difference. That is a deterrent more than anything else I would hope—you know, if you

break the law now, there are absolute, real penalties there that you will face, make no mistake about it. And even more importantly, I believe, workplace manslaughter is now in the law of the land, and that is critically important. I must say, hearing from some, their concerns—as they put it—with the legislation just made absolutely no sense to me. If you look after your workforce, if you provide a safe workplace, then you should not be concerned at all. And of course everyone deserves to come home safely from work regardless of their profession or their workplace.

This bill makes amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, the Dangerous Goods Act 1985, the Equipment (Public Safety) Act 1994, the Accident Compensation Act 1985 and of course the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013, so it is a very wide-ranging piece of legislation that seeks to make a number of critically important reforms. These amendments are designed to improve outcomes for injured workers and their families, enhance scheme operations and increase WorkSafe's ability to prevent and respond to workplace safety incidents. It also amends the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996 in relation to the conduct of hearings by the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal to prohibit alleged offenders from being notified of or attending hearings in matters of family violence or sexual offences. It makes a range of amendments that pertain to our reforms around presumptive rights compensation, and it also amends the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 to strengthen the integrity of the Victorian Legal Services Board, ensuring lawyer members of the VLSB are not the subject of actual or potential disciplinary action at the time of their appointment and can be removed if they are subject to disciplinary action during their term of office.

I feel like I need a glass of water after going through that list of all of the things that this bill will do and reform to make our workplaces safer. We know there is no time to waste, and we know how important it is to support injured Victorian workers and their families, including through our provisional payments reforms, particularly the provisional payments pilot that is now applied more broadly to emergency services workers. When we announced that for police, our frontline emergency services workers, that was something that we had promised to do at the last election. It might seem like a smaller reform, a smaller announcement, a smaller cost, a smaller outlay, but for me at the time, even before I was preselected, it was a game-changing reform, having worked with members of Victoria Police and members of our emergency services family very recently at the time of the election—three weeks beforehand. I heard awful stories from friends and friends of friends who were knocked back, who could not perhaps get the support that they needed when they needed it. That acknowledgement from this government that we need to support those people who go towards the flames, who with their lights and sirens go into the most critical of incidents to help others in the line of duty, was an incredible reform, and I am pleased it is now more broadly applied across Victoria. That is saving lives, it is changing lives. I know that our emergency services workers and many others now are grateful for not having to wait for that support and for getting that support for at least 13 weeks regardless of any outcomes of assessments or otherwise. That is critically important.

Whether it is those reforms or establishing an arbitration function at the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service or, as the member for Eltham articulated quite well—as have other members here—our nation-leading silica licensing scheme, which is obviously quite a bipartisan matter and has been discussed at a national level, we are truly delivering on making our workplaces safer places and making sure we protect the rights of workers in this great state.

Of course we know this bill certainly adds to all of that important work by making a range of amendments, as I so eloquently and humbly detailed, to several workplace safety acts. We know that we are delivering on those important aspects of this government's silica action plan by improving the compensation arrangements for workers with silicosis and other like diseases. We are making sure WorkSafe have the tools that they need to prevent serious injuries by changing the threshold for issuing prohibition notices and directions, and it is on that issue that I actually want to take up a point. I have referred to the good member for Eltham a number of times here, but that goes to show the level of detail and care that she put into her contribution. I must say I loved when she was talking about not

letting the private sector just do what they want and the government stepping in. Others may have issues with regulation, others may have issues with government intervention where it is necessary—

Ms Ward interjected.

Mr TAYLOR: That is right. Some might think you do not need government intervention in the workplace—lightly goes it and light touches here there. But when it comes to regulating—

Ms Ward interjected.

Mr TAYLOR: Absolutely: ‘Just let it go, let it rip’. But I can tell you right now, when it comes to supporting workers in the workplace and making sure they return home safely, government intervention where it is necessary and regulation are critical to making sure our workers, people working, can get home safely. That is exactly what this government’s record is. Whether it is the silica action plan, whether it is criminalising wage theft, whether it is workplace manslaughter or all of the reforms contained in this legislation, this government is absolutely delivering on making sure that Victorians can have a safe workplace.

We know this bill makes a number of important changes to safety and the compensation framework that are necessary to improve those outcomes for Victorian workers and their families. It ensures the effective operation of Victoria’s workplace health and safety laws and supports WorkSafe to improve operations and deliver on its objectives. Of course I am very happy to have spoken in full support of this legislation, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (15:57): It is a real privilege to rise on the Workplace Safety Legislation and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2021 and follow my good friend the member for Bayswater, who gave a very good account of the bill and how important it is to working people—how the Andrews Labor government backs workers in every element of their work. Whether it is protecting their wages, whether it is protecting their lives and their job security, this government puts workers at the heart of everything that it does. This bill is another element in that story.

Let us reflect on where we have come from in the time that we have had in government. We have protected workers’ wages, we have stopped wage theft—we have criminalised it—and we have made sure that we protect the rights and entitlements of all working people. Many said that could not be done, but the Andrews Labor government committed to getting that right and made sure that it protected those outcomes and the conditions. That is what unions stand up for. That is what working people deserve, no less. And then there were the workplace manslaughter laws that we brought into place to make sure that people pay the punishment, not just a slap-on-the-wrist fine but actual meaningful punishment, for a life lost as a result of negligence. That is the legacy of our government, supporting and protecting working people. This bill goes right to the heart of that.

To hear and to follow the member for Thomastown and the member for Eltham reminds me that when I first came here the member for Thomastown was already dominating but when the member for Eltham and I came in in 2014 this was one of the first things that we were appointed to. I did not know how significant that inquiry would be. I had a sense of the policy area and how important it was, but it was a journey that we went on with both career and volunteer firefighters on the impacts of Fiskville and the tragedy in the circumstances that impacted on firefighters at Fiskville from those practices in the 1970s through. What was abundantly clear to us in evidence that was tendered and something that we reflected on in the final report that we delivered to this Parliament was the importance of presumptive legislation and making sure that we recognise various diseases and impacts on Victorians serving our communities and that firefighters are protected and supported into the future. It was a real privilege and really important work. But some things I will always reflect on, on seeing the evidence and the courage that came with presenting before that inquiry, are the landmark reforms that underpin that and the importance of shining a light on a really difficult and dark period in firefighting culture and history, the culture change that Fire Rescue Victoria and the CFA have been on and

acknowledging the mistakes of the past and making sure we protect firefighters, both volunteer and career, into the future.

If you are impacted in your line of work—we have heard this from the member for Frankston as well—when you are running into a burning building, you are thinking about supporting others in that moment. The least that you can expect is that your government and your community will be there to support you if you are impacted in your line of work through some of those diseases. So, broadening out the coverage I think is a really important thing—broadening out and recognising that landmark reform for Victoria. Broadening that out to other workers employed in maintenance of vehicles and equipment is something that I support and something the government supports and has done significant consultation on as well. It builds on all of our work in reforming the fire service as well and making sure we improve safety and outcomes for our firefighters in the generations to come.

Now, the really important point that has been raised by a number of members and is something that I want to reflect on is the work of the Minister for Workplace Safety, who has done an extraordinary amount of work in the silica action plan space. It is an emerging risk that has impacted sadly on too many Victorians and has had disastrous consequences on very young people who had embarked on a trade at the start of their journey in working life, and to be so devastatingly impacted by this industrial illness is an absolute tragedy. We pushed really hard to make sure we acted as quickly as we could to support these families and to support these workers. We have I think at last count 60 claims that have been made to WorkSafe Victoria, and we are empowering WorkSafe to respond to any poor practices or outcomes and behaviours, to issue directions and also to make sure that we are supporting families into the future.

This is really important legislation that protects working people. For anyone that has seen the stories and the outcomes and the tragic circumstances that have impacted on young tradespeople who have had their lives impacted and cut short, they are just horrible tragedies, and I am really pleased on behalf of my community and indeed the Victorian community that these changes to legislation and that extra support will be provided. It is an opportunity to also reflect on those four people that we have lost to silica-related illnesses and that we are at a juncture now where we have had 60 claims accepted and recognised by WorkSafe—but as others have reflected, we are expecting more to come in the future.

There are also some important reforms in the family support benefits space, where the bill will improve access and deliver better support to families of deceased workers, with weekly pension payments for children with a disability to be extended from the age of 16 to the age of 25. Currently under the workers compensation legislation a child with a disability is not eligible to receive a child pension after the age of 16, whereas full-time students or apprentices are eligible for the pension until they reach 25. Another important element in the ‘other matters’ part of this bill will make amendments to the Accident Compensation Act 1985 and the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 as well and provide for improved compensation entitlements for families of deceased workers, because that is the lasting legacy impact. It is the life that is impacted or cut short but also those that we need to as a community embrace and support into the future who live with those consequences. Those generational impacts of someone losing their life in the course of their employment are just so deeply tragic, and then there are those impacts into the future. We need to support them financially but also recognise the mental health and wellbeing impacts into the future.

So there are really important elements and reforms in this bill. It goes to the heart of this government’s ambition of supporting all Victorians and being compassionate, caring and supportive, not just in words but in actions through legislation that we pass in this place. We can be really proud of the legacy that is being created and the reforms that will have generational significance to come, whether it is supporting our wonderful volunteer and career firefighters, whether it is expanding the landmark Victorian legislation around presumptive rights protections in the course of their work or whether it is supporting working people with the silica action plan that the government embarked on and quickly moved on to protect working people for years to come, recognising the need to support their families and empowering WorkSafe to be able to take pre-emptive action, make directions and also follow

through on any unscrupulous operators or employers. It builds on that legacy around supporting workers with the landmark workplace manslaughter laws, which are really incredible reforms that have been a long time coming and were heavily campaigned for by the labour movement and by working people and championed by the likes of Luke Hilakari at Trades Hall and so many other union leaders. You wonder whether this legislation would have seen the light of day in other parliaments or in other terms, but we know on this side of the house that we support working people.

It would have been a great opportunity for all members of this Parliament to front up on a Thursday afternoon and make that contribution. There was a lot of song and dance yesterday about only having 13 days and not much time to prep for bills. So far the opposition have knocked the bails off on Tuesday on this bill. We had a couple of speakers, and then that was about it; that is Parliament done. I mean, they have served about 5 hours today. If you are wanting to contribute and shape the legislative agenda and really make these contributions on behalf of communities and to support working people, you have got to be here and you have got to show up. At the moment it is just the member for Gembrook holding up the show, and that is a bit of a shame really. It is a bit lacklustre. We would have liked a bit more, but that is okay. This bill is really important, and hopefully they can come back in and make some contributions.

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (16:07): It is a great honour to rise and speak in support of the Workplace Safety Legislation and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2021. It is another step forward in delivering on our commitment to protect and support Victorian workers. As one of the final speakers on this bill, it has been really interesting to listen to the debate both on Tuesday and today and to hear the varying and sometimes personal reasons why each has spoken in support of this legislation. For me, entering this Parliament I have been both proud and privileged to speak in support of real and life-changing reforms that are making our workplaces safer for Victorians. In 2019 we saw the passage of the new workplace manslaughter laws that ensure employers who negligently cause the death of workers or members of the public are held to account for their actions. In 2020 we built on this work with the delivery of a provision payment scheme to ensure workers who suffer a workplace mental injury can access the support they need when they need it.

Each time these matters come to the floor of this house we hear stories of loss and pain that are shared by speaker after speaker. The member for Eltham spoke very movingly about her grandfather and nan and the impact on their family of a workplace death. At times like these it becomes clear that almost every Victorian family has been touched in some way by tragic workplace safety injuries, failures and deaths. That includes my own, and it includes the lives of so many of my constituents, my colleagues and my staff. I spoke in detail about my uncle George when we debated the workplace manslaughter legislation and the gaping hole that his death left in the lives of my aunty and my cousins, who were just young boys at the time, and the horrible, traumatic day when my father had to pick the boys up from school and tell them that their dad was not coming home.

Everyone deserves to feel safe and be safe at work, and everyone deserves to come home. This is a mission that this government takes very seriously, and it is not a new commitment by any means. The safety and wellbeing of workers has been a foundational part of Labor's work for decades, and it goes to the heart of our union movement. It was the Cain government in 1985 that established our first safety and compensation scheme, and since that time we have continued to build on this legacy. The people of Victoria know and understand the importance of these achievements. They know that the injury or death of workers should never and can never be just the cost of doing business. That is why it was so disappointing to hear from some opposite during the debate on workplace manslaughter who sought to argue that business would somehow grind to a halt and the sky would fall in. I note the member for Bayswater and his very, very pointed contribution about those who prefer a softly, softly approach to regulation and the concerns that are raised by those opposite when we try to make improvements to the safety of our workers in Victoria. Over a year on from the manslaughter laws and their implementation it is clear that business has not ground to a halt and the sky has not caved in. They are working, and they are working well. What is clear is that this government will continue to

deliver on its commitment to keep Victorians safe at work, and the amendments in this bill are the next step forward in this work, improving outcomes for injured workers and families and enhancing WorkSafe Victoria's ability to prevent and respond to workplace safety incidents.

Critically this bill delivers on elements of the government's comprehensive action plan to address and prevent unsafe silica exposure. As we have heard before, silicosis is a lung disease caused by breathing in silica dust. Silica dust is generated when workers do things like crush, cut, drill, grind or polish certain types of natural or engineered stone—so, for example, the granite that you might find on a kitchen bench. Respirable silica dust particles are microscopic. When they are inhaled they can penetrate deep into the lungs and cause irreversible lung damage. The vast majority of people impacted by this and similar diseases are exposed at work in industries like mining, construction, stonemasonry and demolition. These are enormous industries, and as the member for Tarneit noted in her contribution, these are people at the coalface, responsible for creating some of our beautiful infrastructure and the functional spaces that we all enjoy.

According to the 2016 census around 6.5 per cent of people living and working in Darebin, of which Northcote forms a part, worked across these industries. This is not to mention the many retired tradies and miners who have chosen to call Northcote home. Silicosis can develop quickly or be diagnosed over a decade, but the impacts can be debilitating and fatal. Workers with silicosis can experience shortness of breath, chest pain, fatigue and a harsh cough, and the condition is unstable. They can deteriorate rapidly or over a long period of time, with flare-ups and worsening symptoms until eventually they may find simple activities like walking, sleeping and eating difficult. It can also increase the risk of developing other conditions, including chest infections, emphysema, kidney disease and lung cancer. There is no cure for silicosis. This is something that can never go away and will never go away for the families it affects.

Under the current scheme injured workers are not able to pursue common-law claims when they develop subsequent silica-based diseases if they have already accessed a claim. The current scheme also creates significant difficulties for workers to access further impairment benefits after an initial claim, even if their condition deteriorates. The changes in this bill will address these barriers by allowing injured workers to apply for common-law damages and access further impairment benefits after an initial claim. These changes will help to ensure that our compensation arrangements better reflect the lived experience of the tradies, stonemasons and others who are impacted by these debilitating illnesses. It also means that the compensation process better reflects the lived experiences of workers and that that lived experience extends to mental health impacts.

Importantly this bill allows for the provision of family counselling services to the loved ones of workers impacted by silica and other workplace injuries. We know that when someone is injured or harmed at work they are not the only one impacted—so often parents, partners and children are left reeling as well. Processing the news of a long-term illness or loss is not easy. Adjusting to the responsibility of being a carer or making medical decisions is not easy. These are difficult and stressful experiences for families, so we need to make sure that families are supported through that. To that end we are also delivering improvements to family support benefits, including extending child pensions for young people with disability from 16 to 25 years. We are also extending household services to families of workers with an accepted claim to six months after their passing from a workplace-related injury.

In addition to improving outcomes for injured workers and their families, this bill makes a number of amendments to strengthen the operation of WorkSafe, enhancing its ability to prevent and respond to workplace injuries. This includes expanding the threshold for issuing prohibition notices and directions. In particular it will allow notices for matters that do not pose an immediate risk but are nonetheless a serious risk to health and safety, including cumulative risks like exposure to silica.

I do not have much time left, but I do want to mention the amendments and the historic work that we have done to deliver a compensation scheme for our firefighters. This bill extends this right to vehicle and equipment maintenance workers, who form an integral part of our fire services and often operate

on the same firegrounds where our firefighters are exposed to carcinogens. As with the changes around silicosis and similar diseases, these changes will make our compensation scheme fairer and better reflect the lives and experiences of workers.

There is one other amendment that I want to talk about, and that is the amendment to the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996. I am running out of time, but this essentially brings forward some of our work to put the victim-survivor first in our response to family and gendered violence. It means that perpetrators will no longer be notified in Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal matters, which can be extremely traumatising to the victim-survivors. Many will look at the prospect of having their perpetrator in the room and just give up and not access the support that they need, so this is a very welcome amendment from our government and extends our commitment to victim-survivors in all matters. For these reasons I commend the bill to the house.

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (16:18): I rise today to add my contribution to the Workplace Safety Legislation and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2021, which fundamentally strengthens workplace health and safety laws to provide more support to workers and their families. If ever there was a bill that symbolises what it is to be part of a Labor government, it is a bill such as this. It is a recognition of everything that we have done in this term, and what was done by those who were part of the previous term of this government, and the changes that have been made to strengthen workplace safety. The member for Northcote did touch on a few of those—obviously the workplace manslaughter legislation and the firefighters' presumptive rights both in the initial act, being for firefighters in Fire Rescue Victoria, and those presumptive rights being extended to forest firefighters. As has been mentioned, this bill now extends that to people working on machines and operating vehicles as part of that service; it extends those rights to them.

I want to particularly acknowledge the contributions of a number of members in this house who have told really personal stories about what the workplace safety legislation means to them and how much of a difference it made to their lives, how it has impacted their lives and often drove them to lives in the labour movement. Particularly the member for Lara had seen what had happened to his mum firsthand, and that drove him to become the first OH&S rep at the Ford factory when he was working down there in Geelong.

But I do want to focus a fair amount of my contribution on the amendments in the bill to the Accident Compensation Act 1985 and the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 that improve compensation arrangements for workers with silicosis and similar occupationally acquired diseases. These elements of the bill build upon the Andrews Labor government's comprehensive silica action plan that was introduced in 2019, which took strong action to protect Victorian workers from developing the deadly lung disease silicosis by banning the practice of uncontrolled dry cutting of any materials that contain crystalline silica dust, introducing tough new compliance measures for businesses working with silica, offering free health screenings for 1400 Victorian stonemasons and raising awareness of this deadly disease that is cutting down Victorian workers, even in the prime of their lives. This bill recognises the progressive nature of such debilitating diseases and the ongoing impact that this has on workers and their families. Historically workers seeking to access payouts for silicosis compensation had to prove that their injury had stabilised, adding insult to a chronic occupationally acquired injury. The bill therefore seeks to rectify this situation by improving compensation and assistance entitlements. It also includes other amendments for increased support for families of workers with silicosis and similar diseases, such as counselling support.

Silica dust is a dangerous and potentially lethal substance when inhaled in the lungs. Crystalline silica dust is 100 times smaller than a grain of sand and can be unknowingly inhaled when exposed when stone is mined, manufactured, cut or polished. Stonemasons are especially at risk due to their occupation cutting and polishing stone products. Occupational exposure to silica dust can cause silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and kidney disease, and has been linked to lung cancers. A 2020 Monash University study that was conducted in conjunction with WorkSafe Victoria found concerning statistics about the prevalence of silicosis amongst Victorian stonemasons. Amongst the 456 workers who agreed

to take part in the screening project, 29 per cent, or 133 Victorian workers, were found to have silicosis. Of these 133 people, 102 had simple silicosis while 31 had more severe and complicated cases of the disease. Of the total workers screened, 211, or 65 per cent, were found by the screening program to have clinical abnormalities on their screening test results. The study also found a clinically significant burden of the disease among stonemasons, more than any other line of work. This serves to highlight the dangers present for those working with silica and also underscores the vital importance of this government's work to take action and protect Victorian workers and their families.

Silica is a non-static disease, and it does not just affect older workers who have worked cutting stone and other products for a long time. It is also a disease that affects young tradies, often young men—some with 30 to 40 years of their working life ahead of them—and leaves them suffering from a chronic, progressive and incurable illness which they acquired at work. For example, a young 22-year-old Gold Coast tradie, Connor Downes, had only been working cutting stone for three years when he was diagnosed with a deadly and incurable disease. No-one goes to work or sends their sons or daughters to work to acquire a disease that will not only severely impact their ability to be gainfully and productively employed but may well cut short their lives. Stone benchtops in kitchens or bathrooms or manufactured stone furniture have become a common feature in homes throughout Victoria. No longer a luxury item, they are now standard features in renovations and new construction throughout the state. But no-one would want their stone kitchen island bench to come at the expense of the health or livelihood of those skilled workers who crafted and installed them.

This bill will also amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 to improve compliance by employers by allowing a WorkSafe inspector to issue a prohibition notice, from a standard where a risk is immediate to one where the inspector believes practices involve a serious risk to the health and safety of a person from an immediate or imminent exposure hazard. The government is also ensuring that certain diseases or illnesses will now be able to be prescribed as notifiable by regulation, recognising the significant impact that highly contagious or potentially serious illnesses acquired in the workplace have on Victorians. This is entirely consistent with our government's work to protect Victorian workers by making these workplace-acquired or workplace-transmissible illnesses notifiable, which will align Victoria with the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The Andrews Labor government is also leading the charge for a national silicosis strategy to be adopted to reduce the Australian silica workplace exposure standard from 0.1 milligrams per cubic metre to 0.02 milligrams per cubic metre over an 8-hour day to offer even better legislative protection for Victorians who are exposed to this toxic dust through their work.

Every Victorian worker deserves the highest level of protection that this and every other government can provide them to be safe and protected while at work, and with this bill the Andrews Labor government is expanding its commitment to protect the health and welfare of our stonemasons and other workers at risk from acquiring similar occupational diseases by recognising the progressive nature of this incurable disease and their need for ongoing support and a compensation process which reflects the reality they and their families face every day.

While that is to me the main focus and the biggest change that is introduced as part of this legislation, there are a number of other really important reforms made by this workplace safety legislation bill. As has been mentioned, there are also important changes being made to the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996 in relation to the conduct of hearings by the tribunal, which is a really important stepping stone and builds on our commitment to family violence reforms. So for all of these reasons I think it is a thoroughly important bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (16:28): I take great pleasure in joining the debate on the Workplace Safety Legislation and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2021. It is a throwaway line that you quite often hear in the media or with cynical observers of politics, that there is no difference between the major parties. Quite often it will be, you know, those supporting the Greens political party, saying you should support them because they have a better set of values than the so-called 'older' parties and particularly

the Labor Party. I have not been in the chamber for all of this debate, but I have been listening and watching intently from my office, and I think it is a real shame that we have not seen any speakers from the Greens political party and only the member for Gembrook from the coalition. I have been in this place for nearly 20 years, and—

Mr Battin: Others have spoken.

Ms GREEN: I apologise to the member for Gembrook. There may well have been others, but I certainly have not seen them and I think there were very few. My experience over almost 20 years in this place is that whenever there is a workplace safety legislation bill before the house it is either opposed by those opposite or the support is low key. I think the member for Northcote summed it up well when she was saying that in the debate on the Workplace Safety Legislation Amendment (Workplace Manslaughter and Other Matters) Bill 2019 there were a number of members in this place and in the other chamber that kept talking about the cost to business. I think there should be no business that predicates its making of money and making of a profit on the loss of a human life of a worker or of on an injury to a worker.

I really want to commend the work of the earlier speakers on this bill, particularly the member for Thomastown, the Parliamentary Secretary for Workplace Safety. She has worked all of her working life to ensure worker safety both in her work here and in her work in the trade union movement previously, particularly in manufacturing. We heard from my dear colleague who is sitting next to me, the member for Lara, in his contribution, I think it was yesterday. He told the story of being a little boy that looked forward to coming home from school and seeing his mum there after work doing the things that mums do: preparing food and talking to him and his siblings about how their day was. As a mum it just really cut me to hear him remembering the time—and I think he still remembers that feeling to this day—when he came home from school to find that his mother was not there. She was in hospital due to a workplace injury. I cannot imagine what it would be like. He really gave a word picture for me, knowing the importance of food and family to the Eren family, of what it would be like for any mum or any parent who loves preparing food and caring for their family to lose an index finger. I just cannot imagine how difficult that must have been—the pain and the rehabilitation. We should stand up against anything in workplaces that causes that sort of catastrophic injury.

I did want to make mention of the extension of presumptive rights for other categories of workers within our fire authorities, and I particularly want to pay credit to my late uncle Allan Radford, who passed away as a result of bladder cancer and other cancers. He was a volunteer firefighter. He was also a mechanic. He was quite convinced during his illness that he had acquired his illness through the exposure he had as a CFA volunteer training at the now-closed Fiskville training college. I am sure that he would have really welcomed this being extended to others to acknowledge the sorts of exposures that firefighters have in undertaking their work. I say to my kids that I am potentially a ticking time bomb myself. I do not think anyone knows the sorts of exposures that firefighters like me had on the day of Black Saturday and the days after, particularly on the days after. We searched house to house for many days, and there would have been all sorts of building products. We had no thought for our own safety. So I just hope that that is not something that I and other firefighters will have to face.

My late stepfather, Ron, passed away from that very painful, painful disease asbestosis. Later it was discovered that he had mesothelioma. He drew great comfort from the then Minister for WorkCover, Rob Hulls, in this place moving legislation so that claims for asbestos sufferers could continue on after their deaths, because those dreadful companies were trying to drag out those claims so that the person who had been affected would die and therefore the claim would lapse. He felt comforted that he would be compensated and that Mum and his kids would see something as an acknowledgement of what he had suffered.

Someone else who is very close to me, the late Les Booth, suffered with silicosis. He was the first person that I knew that had silicosis. I am now meeting too many young people that work in kitchen

installations and in stonemasonry, particularly in my electorate, that either are having symptoms or are at risk of this dreadful, dreadful disease. So I am really glad to see that we are making these changes.

I want to give a particular shout-out to a brilliant business in Broadmeadows that is run by my friends Robert and Roshni Thompson. That business is called Betta Stone, and not only are they employing Indigenous people and giving them a good start, they are producing a product that is kind to the planet. They are recycling glass. It is being reduced down to a powder and then being pressed into benches. So it is recycled glass. It looks like a stone benchtop. It looks like a beautiful glass splashback, but it came about from their passion about having a lighter footprint on the planet but also because of Robert's longstanding interest in workplace safety and particularly wanting to address the scourge of silicosis. They hope to make money from this business, but it is a real labour of love for them. And from the minute that they came to see me and say that they were undertaking this business and establishing it in Broadmeadows, it really was about combating silicosis.

So we are not here to advertise particular products for the sake of it, but I would say to any kitchen installer, anyone who is wanting to install a kitchen: please consider Betta Stone. I know that the state government has used some of the products in our GovHub in Morwell; T2, the beautiful tea franchise that is around Australia, they have used it in a lot of their shop fittings; and I know some of the supermarkets have used it as well. But if anyone is watching this live stream, whether you are doing up a business premises or whether you are renovating your house, your kitchen or your bathroom, please consider using a product like Betta Stone rather than the really dangerous composite stones that are around. The more the market and consumers demand a safer product and a product that has less of a footprint on the environment, the better that we will be.

I would hope that we would not have to have legislation that protects against dangerous products, but I am really glad that we have a fabulous minister in the other place that also has a very, very long history in standing up for workers and particularly workers' safety. Finally, I want to commend the member for Thomastown, the member for Eltham and the member for Mordialloc on their great work on the Fiskville inquiry, and they made a great contribution on this bill, and the member for Northcote particularly, in relation to the uncle that she never met and her passion for workplace safety. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (16:38): I move:

That debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Mr FOLEY:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (16:38): It is real pleasure to rise to speak on the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment Bill 2022. With 20 minutes to go until adjournment, it is good to finish this parliamentary sitting week with what is a very good bill for a wide variety of reasons and one where there is bipartisanship, which is great to see.

This bill strengthens many routine public health functions, addressing issues identified in the recent review of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 as well as constraints in the act relating to testing and data collection. The bill also delivers on outstanding government commitments stemming from the Victorian inquiry into the labour hire industry and insecure work and the *Small Business Regulation Review (Visitor Economy) Action Statement*.

The bill amends the act to allow for the registration of lower risk prescribed accommodation, reducing the regulatory burden and costs for the owners of small visitor accommodation, such as bed and breakfasts, boutique guesthouses and farmstays. It also includes accommodation related to labour hire arrangements within the prescribed accommodation framework, ensuring that labour hire workers who support critical Victorian industries are provided with accommodation that meets public health standards. It expands testing data collection and further analysis powers to help improve our management and understanding of infectious diseases and the risks to public health. It expands the circumstances in which the chief health officer may make an examination and testing order for the monitoring and control of infectious diseases, enabling a more targeted and potentially less restrictive public health response. It introduces a civil statutory immunity for officers undertaking public health functions under the act, bringing Victoria into line with all Australian jurisdictions that already provide personal liability protections through their respective public health legislation. And it removes stigmatising references to HIV and hepatitis C from the act, contributing to the Andrews Labor government's commitment to eliminate stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with hepatitis C and HIV.

I will spend the remainder of this contribution focusing on one particular part of the bill, because this is a fairly wideranging bill, and that is how we are delivering on the next steps to implement the recommendations of that historic Victorian inquiry into the labour hire industry and insecure work. It is fair to say that one of the main missions of this government in the more than seven years that we have been in office has been to ensure that every single worker in our state, every single person in our state, experiences the dignity of work. And it is not just about having a job, it is not just about being in employment, it is about being treated fairly.

Our party, all those years ago, was established by the trade union movement to fight for fairness for workers. As the economy changes there are new challenges that are presented for workers in our state, indeed our country. And it is the labour movement collectively—it is trade unions and it is Labor governments, including this Victorian Labor government—that stands shoulder to shoulder with workers to ensure that workers in various industries, the labour hire industry is one and the gig economy industry is another, are not held back in this policy vacuum and therefore exploited.

It is for that reason that in my inaugural speech seven years ago I talked about labour hire. I talked about labour hire because I was so very concerned about insecure work, because if you are in insecure employment you cannot hope to enjoy the sort of dignity that employment can provide you. If you are in insecure employment it makes it very, very difficult to apply for a loan at the bank or to plan for the future. We saw that the proportion of workers who were in an insecure work arrangement was increasing year on year, and that is something that I know this government was very concerned about. Unfortunately there were so many unscrupulous operators in the labour hire space who were taking advantage of that uncertainty, because the people who benefit from insecure work are not the workers, not the community at large, but these larger businesses who are seeking to make significant profits at all costs.

In my parliamentary secretary role I have done quite a bit of work with the Treasurer around the gig economy. We held an inquiry into the on-demand workforce, which made 20 recommendations. This government has adopted all of those recommendations either in full or in principle, and we are working away to implement those. What that is about is ensuring that these workers who have found themselves, due to technology changes that have made the gig economy a very widespread and popular platform, stuck in this policy vacuum are protected.

Of course the thing about our government is that even though industrial relations were referred to the federal government back in the 1990s, we will nonetheless do everything we can within our own remit to ensure that we protect the rights of workers, and we are doing that in terms of workers in the gig economy just like we have been doing that when it comes to labour hire.

The next step is what is in this bill, and that is to ensure that labour hire workers are given appropriate accommodation. I will quote from the report of the Victorian inquiry into the labour hire industry and insecure work:

It is apparent that the Victorian regulatory framework outlined in chapter 4 has not been effective to address the problems with provision of accommodation associated with labour hire arrangements, which have been illustrated in evidence provided to the Inquiry and from other sources. The incidence of these accommodation models appears to have grown extremely quickly, consistent with the general growth of labour hire arrangements and the use of temporary migrant workers over the last 10 years or so.

I think in many ways you could have written the same paragraph about the gig economy as well. As I said, where technology has changed, where the economic landscape has changed, these changes have happened very quickly, and governments, state and federal, have had to keep up with those changes in order to preserve a bit of dignity in workers and in this sort of work.

The bill responds to recommendations 9 and 10 of the inquiry by ensuring that all accommodation provided to a worker under or in connection with a labour hire arrangement will be required to be registered with the local council and meet public health standards. This will help prevent all of those things that we read about in the report—things like overcrowding—and also regulate the numbers of bathrooms and toilets, maintenance, cleanliness and the register of occupants. We knew that the situation was bad, but I think that this historic report really did highlight just how poorly a lot of these workers in the labour hire industry were treated.

In my last 50 seconds I just want to give a big shout-out to the union that I am a member of, the United Workers Union, previously the National Union of Workers, which did a sterling job when it came to upholding the rights of these very vulnerable workers employed by some unscrupulous operators and pushing very, very hard for this inquiry into labour hire. Thank goodness we were elected in 2014, because I really could not see this sort of action taken by those opposite. It is only Labor governments and trade unions who protect the rights of workers.

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (16:48): I am pleased to speak on this Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment Bill 2022. However, may I join others in the opportunity to thank our health workers, both in Hawthorn and in Victoria, for the incredible work they have done throughout this pandemic.

Our commitment as a government to public health has been incredibly clear throughout not just the last two years but our entire time in government. Broadly, some do not consider the importance of public health until a crisis, but our public health system operates every day to keep Victorians safe. We should also remember our public health workers and broader system in future times without a crisis when they will need support, reforms and investment after this pandemic. This bill, by amending the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, will strengthen routine public health actions, keeping Victorians safe.

I will say just a few words about improving the standards of labour hire accommodation, infectious diseases and expanding testing data collection, and statutory immunity for public health officers—three aspects that I will just touch on in the time that I have. I would like to talk about how this bill protects labour hire workers. The labour hire industry has grown over the last 30 years to become a significant Victorian employer and a major contributor to our economy. However, we are all aware of the horrific exploitation of workers, in particular vulnerable and migrant workers, that was unearthed around 2015. In the subsequent submissions and report it is clear how dreadfully these workers were treated and that they were subject to poor standards in health, poor standards in safety and were ultimately forced to accept a poor standard of living. Now, this is unacceptable, and as we are a government committed to the protection of all workers, this bill is part of a process of rectifying these issues in the labour hire industry. As Australians we are generally proud of the working conditions we have fought for in this country. We rightfully expect these higher standards, and they should apply with no exceptions. Indeed struggles like the Eureka Stockade have been some of the defining moments in which our state and country have been forged. In protecting that legacy we cannot simply

rely on history. We need to remain vigilant to protect those principles as the world of work changes. This amendment is very much in that spirit.

The final report of the Victorian inquiry into the labour hire industry and insecure work leaves us in no doubt that our current framework for labour hire accommodation has failed to adequately regulate the standard accommodation provided through labour hire arrangements. This has to change, and this is the point of this legislation. The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 in its current state does provide a regulatory framework that requires prescribed accommodation to be registered with local councils, which are the regulators for said prescribed accommodation. Unfortunately some providers simply commenced arrangements to avoid the framework. If prescribed accommodation is not registered under Victorian laws, they remain invisible and councils are unable to regulate them. I will not delve into the egregious practices of this act or indeed the broad common decency committed by some of these providers. What I will say is what I would hope would be an uncontroversial statement, and that is: every worker deserves to work and live in safe, clean and habitable conditions. This bill will operate to broaden the scope of prescribed accommodation, ensuring that all labour hire accommodation for workers will be registered with local councils and will meet public health standards.

This government, and indeed the Labor Party itself, has a long, proud history of protecting working people. We have been dedicated for over a century to protecting our workers. Today the fight to protect our workers continues, and it is often in relation to migrant workers. It is simply disgraceful the way migrant workers have been treated in this country. Even a cursory search through our national media will yield countless reports of migrant workers being underpaid, exploited and at times dying preventable deaths. I am proud of this bill because it does more on this vital issue, but we must continue to protect workers, particularly migrant workers. They must be treated not simply as an accessible pool of labour but as the living, feeling human beings that they are. We cannot afford to take a laissez-faire approach to workers rights. The statistics and anecdotes sadly tell us that workers are still subject to poor treatment and substandard labour hire accommodation. This bill will help fix housing for many migrant and domestic workers. I have had vulnerable temporary visa holders approach my office when they have had nowhere else to turn. My electorate of Hawthorn contains Swinburne University, a fine institution which attracts students from around the globe. However, too many students have found employment where they are underpaid, work in dangerous conditions and encounter standards that in no way befit an advanced democracy like ours. We must do better. This bill is part of this approach, because these students are smart, they are dedicated, they are driven and they do not deserve to suffer. I have spent my life in education, and no student or worker deserves to be treated like this.

So to expanding the infectious diseases testing data collection. This pandemic has radically changed the way in which we deal with the control and management of infectious diseases. Subsequently this bill will expand testing data collection and analysis, improving our management and understanding of infectious diseases and public health risks. The COVID pandemic has underscored the value of this type of data as all test results have been vital to contact tracing and the assessment of the extent of COVID spread. As these regulations strike a fair balance between privacy considerations and the need to inform appropriate public health measures, where possible data will be de-identified and aggregated. However, it must be remembered that this data is of paramount importance to our general public health.

The third one that I picked out is the statutory immunity for public health officers. This pandemic has brought out the worst in some people but the best in others—no surprises there—and our public health officials have been some of the best, including the chief health officer, delegates of the CHO and authorised officers who undertake vital work delivering public health priorities. Unfortunately the anti-science and anti-vax crowd have been a sad sight throughout these last few months. Many people may not have known that Victoria had a CHO in years gone by, but over the last two years we have seen how essential this position can be to a thorough public health response. As a state we have been ably served by the current CHO, Brett Sutton, and I think he has become synonymous with the role for many Victorians. We need to attract and retain high-quality individuals to these roles, something that the possibility of being named in litigation unnecessarily impedes. They are employed to keep Victoria

safe. They should not be sued for doing their job, which is why this bill will introduce a civil statutory immunity for the CHO, delegates and other authorised officers. This will bring Victoria into line with other jurisdictions, as they already have civil liability protections for officers performing public health functions under their public health legislation. A litany of accountability measures will remain, and this immunity does not cover criminal liability. This is about updating the protections for public health officers in order to allow them to fulfil their functions without undue fear of future litigation. All of us should be thanking them for their hard work under difficult circumstances over the last few years.

I commend this bill to the house.

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) (16:58): Thank you, Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to provide a long contribution on this bill. I really just wanted to acknowledge in relation to health the enormously good work that our aged care sector did during the period of COVID over the last two years. You will note that there were fortunately no deaths in our public aged care sector. These facilities represent about 10 per cent of the aged care sector across the state, many of them in Ballarat and Bendigo, as the Deputy Speaker would know. I just want to acknowledge the great work that the nurses, the staff, the cleaners and the like did, and I would also like to acknowledge the great work that the public servants did in that time, including the work with the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre, which was a joint response with the federal government in relation to issues in the private sector. You will note that in public sector aged care we had no deaths, because of the quality of the training and the amount of nurses we had—one to every seven clients at our aged care facilities. I really just wanted to put that on the record. As the former minister responsible in that space, I was incredibly proud of the great work that our public servants, nurses, cleaners, cooks—the whole lot—did together during that period of time.

But obviously this bill is not about thanking our marvellous aged care sector workers but, I guess, expanding the opportunities to collect data more than anything else. They will work with the sector to actually identify the data they need.

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

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Circulated amendments

Circulated government amendments as follows agreed to:

1. Clause 24, line 13, omit “Review” and insert “Appeals”.
2. Clause 24, line 28, omit “Review” and insert “Appeals”.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

ALPINE RESORTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Ms D'AMBROSIO:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.**Read second time.***Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.**

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

**WORKPLACE SAFETY LEGISLATION AND OTHER MATTERS AMENDMENT BILL
2021***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Ms HORNE:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.**Read second time.***Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.**

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.**Adjournment**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (17:01): (6236) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Health, and I am seeking answers on behalf of constituents in Swan Hill as to why families have had to wait so long when they have rung 000 for ambulances. The first family I am raising this on behalf of is that of Christopher Larkings, who has made an inquiry about his elderly mother who tragically had a fall one morning. Her personal alarm did not activate until 2.20 in the afternoon, and he rang an ambulance at 2.25 pm. He then called again at 3.01 pm. He then called again at 3.30 pm. At 3.45 pm he called again, but it was not until 4 o'clock that an ambulance arrived for his mother. It was basically an hour and a half from when the first call was made to when an ambulance arrived. He has said to me that he is extremely disappointed with the response time of that ambulance. What he mentioned to me was yes, his mother had a fall and now she has recovered and is all right, but if she had been critically ill, she would have passed away before the ambulance arrived. He wants answers as to why it took an ambulance an hour and a half to arrive from the first call he made to 000.

The other person I raise this on behalf of is Joan Edwards, who was the wife of Alfred, and her son, David, who were well reported on in the *Herald Sun*. They still have not had a satisfactory response as to why after a number of calls to Ambulance Victoria there was not an ambulance turning up there. This was more tragic than the Larkings family case in that Alfred passed away while his wife was there because the ambulance did not come.

I think both those families are owed a response from the Minister for Health as to why those ambulances did not come in time. We pay our taxes. Most people pay the fees to the ambulance service, and when they are ill—particularly when they are elderly—they expect an ambulance to come within a satisfactory response time from when it is called. We are having reports nearly every day coming into the office now, or other MPs' offices, as to the fact that the ambulance service is not responding in a suitable time, that 000 does not have enough people answering the calls. I would ask the Minister for Health to please respond to the Edwards family and to the Larkings family as to why ambulances did not come in satisfactory times when they were called.

MORDIALLOC ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (17:04): (6237) It is a pleasure to rise tonight with an adjournment for the Minister for Education and Deputy Premier and to ask the minister to join me for a visit to Yarrabah School in Aspendale to celebrate the completion of building works and the wonderful community that underpins everything about Yarrabah. Yarrabah School is a specialist development school in our local community. It was for many years portable city. As the growth of this school and its need expanded into the future we saw more and more portables come onto site. I remember very vividly back in late 2014 the then principal coming to me and saying, 'This is not a great outcome for students who need additional support. We need to do something about it'. A few years later we embarked on a journey—it is one of the greatest things to be involved in in the community—to rebuild Yarrabah School brick by brick to make sure that regardless of their circumstances every student in Victoria receives the very best facilities and the very best outcomes. So more than \$20 million was invested to transform Yarrabah for the future—new buildings across early years all the way through to senior education. It is such a wonderful investment and transformation.

When we think about investment across the Mordialloc electorate, it is just up the road at Mordialloc College—we are up to stage 2 of building works, which are well underway—or up the road at Parkdale Secondary College's stage 3 building works, with more classrooms coming on site to deal with some of that growth and capacity. When we look at the changes that have happened at Chelsea Heights Primary School, \$4.5 million has been invested for new classrooms and learning spaces. There have been upgrades to the STEM centre at Edithvale Primary School and a new arts centre. There is a new library and new upgrades at Aspendale Primary School and then also most recently the master plan and first stage at Chelsea Primary.

We can look then at the investment that has been made also for our non-government schools, whether it is the St Louis de Montfort's primary school—we are involved in that with building upgrades—or St Joseph's primary school in Chelsea, the new school hall there and the wonderful transformation that has delivered to our community. St Patrick's primary school in Mentone, which I share with the member for Sandringham—they are well underway with their building works as well.

We are seeing across sectors the investment that has been delivered to our students to make sure that no-one is left behind. The investment in our specialist schools—dozens have been upgraded and transformed in a very short period of time. These were old school buildings that were not fit for purpose, and across our state we have led that building agenda to make sure students with additional needs, students who need that extra support, get first-class facilities. That is what Yarrabah is all about. It was the little school with a big heart; it is a bit bigger now, but its heart is as big as ever—and I cannot wait for the Deputy Premier to join me and visit once again.

CLYDE NORTH POLICE STATION

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (17:07): (6238) My adjournment is for the Minister for Police, and the action I seek is for the minister to come out and meet with a group in Clyde North to give an explanation to the residents of Casey as to why they have to endure four years of empty promises from the Victorian Labor government around a police station for Clyde. Now, the minister was more than happy and the government was more than happy to be out in the media talking about their plans to put a new police station in Clyde North. They spoke about the fact that they had the funding—they were all ready to go. Everyone around the community got excited, and what we see now from speaking to people in that area is that not even the contracts for the land are signed. They have not even signed off on the location where this new police station is going.

People are complaining down there about speeding and hoon driving. We have had issues with some violence in the area. We have had home invasions. In a construction area—obviously most would know the amount of construction going on through Clyde North—the number of people who have had items stolen from building sites is astronomical. We had at one stage a report from the RACV that one in 19 properties throughout Clyde North was broken into or had theft from it within a 12-month period—one in every 19. This area needs and deserves to have a fire station—sorry, a police station. They do deserve a fire station as well; that is something else that was promised to them. They do deserve a police station down there. We have had over 500 contacts in our office—residents in Clyde North who have come to our office—asking why they have not got a police station in their area when they have been promised it for so long.

Clyde North, like Berwick South, has been represented by Labor for at least eight years, and in the Narre Warren South area it is 20 years. Unfortunately those areas have not had a member of Parliament that has lived locally in that area for that time. The current member for Narre Warren South, as we know, lives closer to the city. The former one lived out in Mount Martha. These people do not understand what is happening in those communities, because they do not live in those areas. They do not see what is happening. They do not see the people hanging around on the street and the kids hanging around on the street.

Ms Allan: On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your guidance on how reflections on other members of Parliament—

Mr Battin interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House is raising a point of order.

Ms Allan: Thank you, Speaker. I seek your guidance on how reflections on where other members of Parliament reside, have their personal residence, is in any way relevant to the adjournment matter that the member is asking. He is asking for action on a particular issue from the minister for police. Where members of Parliament choose to live with their families is a matter for them.

Mr BATTIN: On the point of order, Speaker, it has every bit of relevance for our democracy, what we have here in Victoria, when members of Parliament choose not to live in their electorate, in the area that they represent. If they choose not to live there, it is very difficult for them to understand—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BATTIN: Sorry, you only cut one off. It is very difficult for them to understand the consequences of what happens in those communities—

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand the member for Gembrook's point of order. The member for Gembrook can resume his seat.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member's time has concluded in any case.

NEVERMIND BAR

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (17:11): (6239) My adjournment matter is for the Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr KENNEDY: and the undoubted star of question time today. The action I seek is that the minister join me in visiting the iconic Nevermind Bar in Hawthorn, where I live. ‘Nevs’ is the name of the Nevermind Bar, and it recently received a Victorian live music venue grant from the state government, greatly assisting the Hawthorn music scene. Nevs has had many fantastic performances over its 20-year history. After all, it is a venue famed for its capacity to produce first-rate musicians—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I just ask the member for Hawthorn to resume his seat. If members at the table want to continue debating a previous point of order, they can maybe do so outside. The member for Hawthorn should be heard in silence.

Mr KENNEDY: Thank you, Speaker. Perhaps my fellow parliamentarians are familiar with names like Chet Faker or Ali Barter. Indeed many musicians who have played at this stellar venue have gone on to win Triple J and ARIA awards. It also showcases the strong student community in Hawthorn, with students from across the city travelling to attend bustling venues like this one—as well as our locals from Swinburne University. Indeed our local businesses are getting busier with each passing weekend, and the arts fuel the vitality of our local economy. Our fantastic local music scene is a key contributor to our incredibly vibrant university district.

Members of this house might be surprised by how frequently I drop by this local music venue. I myself was surprised not to recognise any of the records that were played the last time I visited, I have to say. What I will say is that the Nevermind is a huge contributor to an incredibly vibrant precinct in my electorate of Hawthorn. They actively support many local student, sporting and LGBTIQA associations and bodies. Venues like this are so important because they build communities—communities centred around a shared love of music and all things creative. I am proud of how my government has assisted Nevs. It exemplifies how our ambition in this area goes beyond recovery. It is a forward-thinking vision to build our creative industries and our economy.

CITY OF PORT PHILLIP CHILDCARE CENTRES

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (17:13): (6240) My adjournment is directed to the Premier, and the action that I seek is for the Premier to personally intervene and provide financial government support which would stop the closure of three childcare centres before they are forced to close. Port Phillip council has proposed to sell three childcare centres in its portfolio: Eildon Road children’s centre in St Kilda, Elwood Children’s Centre in Elwood and The Avenue Children’s Centre and Kindergarten in Balaclava.

As the Premier may be aware, Elwood Children’s Centre is in the Brighton electorate. For background, the Elwood centre, based at 46 Tennyson Street, is a community-run childcare centre and kindergarten that has operated since 1985. It offers 35 places per day. There are currently 16 full-time staff, 55 families and 65 children enrolled there. All three centres proposed for closure are operated from aged council-owned buildings which require significant maintenance upgrades, so much so that council cannot afford to fund the upgrades without state government financial support. When council sought financial support from the government last year the department advised by email on 5 August 2021 that support would not be available to the centre as they did not meet certain grant requirements.

Closure of the Elwood centre would have a significant impact on my community. Let me tell the Premier why. Council has previously confirmed that there is already a shortfall of childcare places in Elwood in the southern end of the municipality, and further, under the proposal council would vacate Elwood Children's Centre in December 2023, Eildon Road would vacate in December this year and the North St Kilda site would be closed in December 2023. The cumulative effect of the closures would be a net reduction of 160 places—160 places!—in a part of the municipality where there is already a shortfall. But the best way to describe how strongly the closure of the Elwood Children's Centre would affect my community is to refer the Premier to the words of local Elwood mothers. As Bel said to me recently:

Losing Elwood Children's Centre would put families and single parents such as myself at risk. To be honest with you James, I actually don't know what I will do if ECC is forced to close.

Or as Pennie has said to me:

Keeping the centre open is also not just about the kids. This is about women. Working Mums, Single Mum's, Stay at home Mum's, Mum's looking to re-enter the workforce. We need to support women ...

Premier, Labor needs to stop neglecting my community. It is time for the Labor government to step up and do the right thing.

CHARIS MENTORING LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (17:16): (6241) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Crime Prevention. Programs for Māori and Pasifika youth are vital for my electorate. Some of the young people in my community have been involved in youth justice. Māori and Pasifika families have been let down since the Howard government closed pathways for many in this vibrant community to gain permanent residency and citizenship when the scare campaign from the Tampa affair in 2001 destroyed the positive relationship with New Zealand passport holders. Back then the federal Attorney-General decided to reclassify New Zealand passport holders as permanent residents for tax purposes only. This dog whistling was an attempt to stop refugees who were accepted by New Zealand from coming to Australia. Since then the lack of support networks and programs available to our Māori and Pasifika communities have had a huge negative impact.

Last year Charis Mentoring was funded by the Andrews Labor government with a \$15 000 grant to run summer holiday programs in order to work with vulnerable young people across the Melton area at a time when many can fall into trouble. They work with young people all across the west, so this will cover Melton and a few other electorates. At-risk young people were provided structured holiday plans in which case managers worked with each young person under supervision to create a holiday plan and align them with their interests and case plan, utilising the programs on top of existing Department of Education and Training programs and youth justice brokerage.

The tactile all-out leadership camp and rugby tag competition focus on Māori and Pasifika young people, and the Pasifika young leaders group will work with mentors to plan and run the two-day tag competition, teaching them leadership skills as they deliver the competition for their peers. This program will help between 80 and 100 Māori and Pasifika young people in Melbourne's north-west. Can the minister please provide me an update on this program and the successes of this program that have occurred?

BRUNSWICK ELECTORATE CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Dr READ (Brunswick) (17:18): (6242) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is that he join me on a bike ride along the Upfield shared path in Brunswick during peak hour so we can observe some of the problems and discuss possible solutions. We will start at the Jacinda Arden mural, and we will roll past Anstey station and watch the bikes dodge train passengers in the narrow space between the station and the apartments being built opposite. Now, we should stop to applaud the builders who have put up scaffolding over the path to keep it open rather

than closing it for over two years, as happened further south. We will keep as close as we can to the wall on the left to avoid clipping handlebars with bikes coming the other way along this narrow stretch.

After admiring the Commons apartment building and Bulleke-Bek Park, we will wait for a gap at Hope Street, which is named after the attitude taken by Brunswick bike riders to bike infrastructure in this district. Then there is a long narrow stretch down past North Walls, where pedestrians often walk in single file to let bikes and scooters through. After Victoria Street there is a bushy patch planted and maintained by the Upfield Urban Forest group followed by a narrow downhill pinch at Brunswick station, where we will have to try and avoid terrorising more train passengers, who can sometimes feel like unwilling participants in Spain's annual running of the bulls.

After another wait to cross Albert Street we can enjoy a long, broad section of path, dodging schoolkids, shopping trolleys and dogs, before it narrows to a severe pinch point between a historic footbridge over the tracks near the Brunswick Baths. A little further down we will have to go onto the road at Railway Place. Then we will cross Union Street, where I once saw a rider get hit by a car trying to beat the boom gates. We will then enter the broad, newly developed precinct around Jewell station, where train passengers try to find a gap in the bike traffic so that they can enter the station in a process of natural selection. Then we are back into another narrow stretch between a brick wall and the train tracks to the point where we join the bike traffic jam at Brunswick Road. If we are late, we may wonder if we will get across before the lights change; there are that many people riding at peak hour. Finally, we will watch how most riders tackle the Russian roulette right turn from Park Street into the safety of Royal Parade. Then we should discuss how best to address the growing need for safe cycleways in Brunswick, and where better than in a coffee shop on nearby Sydney Road?

GROWING SUBURBS FUND

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (17:20): (6243) My adjournment matter that I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Local Government and concerns the Growing Suburbs Fund. The action I seek is that the minister provide further information on how the Growing Suburbs Fund is supporting my electorate of Narre Warren South. As I informed the house last sitting week, I recently joined the Minister for Local Government and my neighbouring MPs for the announcement of \$926 000 towards the \$1.7 million Gwendoline Children's Centre upgrade in partnership with the City of Casey. It was certainly worthy of a front page on the Berwick *Star News*, as was the Clyde level crossing removal today.

This Growing Suburbs Fund investment will deliver renewed facilities, including updated kindergarten rooms and a redesigned maternal and child health area, and modernise the family and children's centre to support our youngest students through their early years. I understand that the Growing Suburbs Fund has supported some 28 projects throughout Casey, including in the member for Gembrook's electorate, and it has done this since 2015. These projects help to bring our growing community together with the facilities they deserve. It really is important that this government continues investing in our local community services and facilities, and the Growing Suburbs Fund has been instrumental in delivering local projects with the backing and support of the City of Casey, including upgrades of halls, community centres and reserves. I would like to thank the minister for his support of local projects, including early childhood services in Narre Warren South. I would appreciate any further information on how the Growing Suburbs Fund and indeed the investment in Gwendoline Children's Centre will benefit my electorate, and I look forward to sharing the minister's response with the whole community.

SANDRINGHAM ELECTORATE PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (17:22): (6244) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing, and the action that I seek is for the minister to confirm a date and time for the briefing that was offered to me by the minister with Ben Rimmer, CEO of Homes Victoria, earlier this year.

Together with members of my community and local council we have been surprised, some may say caught off guard, to read the housing minister's recent press release about social housing developments within the Sandringham district. Most recently on 15 December 2021, just 10 days before Christmas, the minister announced that there would be a rebuild, an increase of public housing units on Bluff Road in Hampton East. This announcement is on top of another plan to redevelop public housing in Kenneth Street, Sandringham.

From the very outset I want to be clear about my position on public housing. Firstly, the level of unmet demand for public housing in the state is in my view an absolute disgrace, and for a government that says it cares so much for people, why has the waitlist been allowed to balloon out to an unimaginable level on their watch? As of December 2021 there were some 54 587 of our fellow Victorians on the waitlist, and 30 554 of those are considered priority access cases. Secondly, I do not oppose public housing in my community, and this is a view shared by the majority of local residents. I also do not oppose a possible increase in public housing stock in our area so long as the following conditions are met: where there is any proposed increase in public housing stock, there must be an equal increase in services provided to those people in housing, and further, any developments should fit within the character of our area. For example, the proposal to put three dwellings on one block in a street where residents would never have a similar proposal agreed to by council is simply not appropriate. It should be the aspiration of every government, no matter their colour, for people in public housing to be there for as short a time as possible and to support them to get back on their own feet, to be self-sufficient. The worst thing that any government could do is to increase public housing stock while not increasing services to give vulnerable people the support they need, the hand up they need not just the handout. I look forward with great enthusiasm to hearing the minister's confirmation of a time and date for this very important briefing with Mr Rimmer to discuss these matters that are of ongoing interest and concern to me and to my community.

NORTHCOTE ELECTORATE AGED CARE

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (17:25): (6245) My adjournment is to the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, and the action I seek is that the minister join me in Northcote to hear directly from our older residents about the issues that are important to them. With around 16 per cent of Northcote residents aged 60 and over and many born overseas with English as a second language, our suburbs are home to a very diverse older community. Each and every resident is unique. Some are still working. Others are actively volunteering or caring for their families. Some are living at home and many are in residential care. Whatever the circumstances, as our residents age they deserve to feel safe, supported and connected to their community. Sadly this is not always the case. From social isolation to economic insecurity, health challenges and housing uncertainty, there is significant work to do to give our older residents the care they deserve.

Our federal aged care system is an absolute mess. After nine years of disgraceful neglect, a pandemic that has brought an already broken sector to its knees and a federal aged care minister who refuses to acknowledge his own abject failure, aged care is in crisis. I have heard from heartbroken residents who are frustrated and furious at the federal government's scandalous neglect of aged care residents. The sector is facing huge staff shortages, and is it any wonder? Aged care staff are some of the most underpaid, under-resourced and undervalued workers by the Morrison government, and after a royal commission that they have left sitting on the shelf it is clear that the only way to fix aged care will be to change the government.

But many older residents in Northcote also want to maintain their independence as long as possible by continuing to live at home. There is high demand in our suburbs for in-home care and support through aged care packages. Disappointingly, we are continually having to defend these council-run services from being on the chopping block by the Greens. For years they have sought to privatise these critical services, and at very short notice over Christmas they suspended in-home aged care support. That meant hundreds of residents went without personal care, grocery shopping and cleaning at a time when the pandemic was weighing down our state and residents were even more vulnerable. Our residents

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received a heartless and confusing letter to communicate the news, and it caused significant distress. Our older residents deserve to age with dignity, support and care, not with neglect and uncertainty. I know the minister is committed to seeing our older residents safe and supported to age well in their own communities, and I look forward to welcoming him to hear directly from locals about what more we can do.

RESPONSES

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (17:27): Ten members raised matters for honourable ministers, and those matters will be referred to those ministers for their action and response.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5.28 pm until Tuesday, 8 March.