



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 8 September 2026

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Ben Carroll (from 28 July 2026)

Jacinta Allan (from 27 September 2023 to 28 July 2026)

Daniel Andrews (to 27 September 2023)

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Gabrielle Williams (from 28 July 2026)

Ben Carroll (from 28 September 2023 to 28 July 2026)

Jacinta Allan (to 27 September 2023)

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

Jess Wilson (from 18 November 2025)

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

John Pesutto (to 27 December 2024)

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

David Southwick (from 28 January 2026)

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

David Southwick (to 27 December 2024)

Leader of the Nationals

Danny O’Brien (from 26 November 2024)

Peter Walsh (to 26 November 2024)

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Anthony Carbines (from 15 April 2026)

Mary-Anne Thomas (to 15 April 2026)

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury (from 13 October 2025)

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

James Newbury (to 7 January 2025)

Members of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lister, John ⁸	Werribee	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ¹	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Marsh, Anthony ⁹	Nepean	Lib
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Cheeseman, Darren ²	South Barwon	Ind	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cleeland, Annabelle	Euroa	Nat	Pallas, Tim ¹⁰	Werribee	ALP
Connolly, Sarah	Laverton	ALP	Pearson, Danny	Essendon	ALP
Couzens, Christine	Geelong	ALP	Pesutto, John	Hawthorn	Lib
Crewther, Chris	Mornington	Lib	Read, Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Crugnale, Jordan	Bass	ALP	Richards, Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Richardson, Tim	Mordialloc	ALP
De Martino, Daniela	Monbulk	ALP	Riordan, Richard	Polwarth	Lib
de Vietri, Gabrielle	Richmond	Greens	Rowswell, Brad	Sandringham	Lib
Dimopoulos, Steve	Oakleigh	ALP	Sandell, Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Edbrooke, Paul	Frankston	ALP	Settle, Michaela	Eureka	ALP
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Smith, Ryan ¹¹	Warrandyte	Lib
Farnham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Foster, Eden ³	Mulgrave	ALP	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Fowles, Will ⁴	Ringwood	Ind	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Groth, Sam ⁵	Nepean	Lib	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Hibbins, Sam ^{6,7}	Prahran	Ind	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Werner, Nicole ¹²	Warrandyte	Lib
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Westaway, Rachel ¹³	Prahran	Lib
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
			Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ Resigned 27 September 2023

² ALP until 29 April 2024

³ Sworn in 6 February 2024

⁴ ALP until 5 August 2023

⁵ Resigned 13 February 2026

⁶ Greens until 1 November 2024

⁷ Resigned 23 November 2024

⁸ Sworn in 4 March 2025

⁹ Sworn in 2 June 2026

¹⁰ Resigned 6 January 2025

¹¹ Resigned 7 July 2023

¹² Sworn in 3 October 2023

¹³ Sworn in 4 March 2025

Party abbreviations

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

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Tuesday 8 September 2026

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 12:03 pm, read the prayer and made an Acknowledgement of Country.

Bills

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026

Introduction and first reading

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (12:05): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 to broaden the concept of corrupt conduct and enhance the IBAC's ability to follow the money, to make consequential amendments to the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:05): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (12:06): The bill makes amendments to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 to expand IBAC's jurisdiction to enable it to investigate suspected corrupt conduct by third-party and private subcontractors where there is a connection between the alleged corrupt conduct and the performance of a public function funded by government. It will also broaden the definition of 'corrupt conduct' to replace the requirement that corrupt conduct constitute a relevant offence with the requirement that the conduct constitute any offence and lower the threshold of conduct constituting a serious disciplinary matter to allow IBAC to investigate a broader range of integrity-compromising behaviours and make other necessary consequential and technical amendments.

Read first time.

Ben CARROLL: Under standing order 61(3)(b), I advise the house that representatives of the other parties and independents have been provided with a copy of the bill and a briefing in accordance with the standing order. I will therefore move the second reading immediately.

Statement of charter compatibility

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (12:08): Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Charter), I make this Statement of Compatibility with response to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026 (Bill).

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

Overview

The Bill introduces amendments to the *Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011* (IBAC Act) to expand IBAC's jurisdiction to examine and investigate corruption.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Broaden the definition of 'corrupt conduct' to enable IBAC to investigate conduct that would constitute a 'serious disciplinary matter' or any offence, and
- Expand the definitions of 'public body' and 'public officer' to enable IBAC to investigate suspected corrupt conduct of persons performing public functions on behalf of the State, when the conduct is linked to the expenditure or use of public funds.

Human Rights Issues

The human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill include:

- Right to freedom of movement (section 12)
- Right to privacy and reputation (section 13)
- Right to freedom of expression (section 15(2))
- Property rights (section 20)
- Right to a fair hearing (section 24(1))
- Right to protection against self-incrimination (section 25(2)(k)).

Currently the IBAC Act empowers IBAC to identify, investigate and expose 'corrupt conduct', but only if the conduct constitutes a 'relevant offence' (being an indictable offence against an Act or certain common law offences such as misconduct in public office and bribery of a public official). Clause 5(2) of the Bill removes the relevant offence requirement and expands IBAC's jurisdiction to include conduct that would constitute a 'serious disciplinary matter' (as defined under clause 4(a)) or 'any offence'. These changes will enable IBAC to investigate a wider range of unethical or integrity-comprising behaviours, common law offences, and summary offences which don't meet the current threshold for a relevant offence.

Clause 6 of the Bill enhances IBAC's capacity to examine corrupt conduct in the exercise or performance of public functions, including where those functions extend to private contractors if there is a connection between the alleged conduct and government funding. Pursuant to the amendments, IBAC will be empowered to investigate corrupt conduct of 'associated entities' as defined in clause 4(a), which will be included under the existing definitions of public body and public officer in section 6(1) of the IBAC Act. This will address corruption risks which are increasingly arising where public functions are delivered, or public funds are administered, beyond traditional government structures. This includes, for example, where there is misuse of public funds or lack of transparency of those funds, by a broader range of persons or entities who now deliver public functions, such as through public/private partnerships, or other complex contracting arrangements.

Clause 8(1) of the Bill provides transitional provisions to account for:

- active investigations underway before the commencement day or where IBAC has made a determination to investigate the complaint but taken no action,
- complaints or notifications already received by IBAC but not yet determined,
- complaints or notifications received after the commencement day and
- own motion investigations after the commencement day.

Investigations that have been finalised will not be subject to the reforms.

Clause 8(2) of the Bill provides a transitional provision to delay compliance with section 57 of the IBAC Act for a period of six months for any associated entity that will now be captured by IBAC's jurisdiction. This seeks to provide IBAC additional time in which to update its policies and procedures and implement communications regarding the new obligations, so that any associated entities that do not already fall within IBAC's jurisdiction can be made aware of their new obligations.

There is a strong public interest in ensuring that public funds are utilised appropriately and in line with their intended purpose. The reforms promote transparency and seek to build public confidence in both IBAC and the public sector, by allowing Victorians to trust that IBAC is equipped to investigate and expose corruption. As Victoria's premier anti-corruption body, it is integral that IBAC is afforded necessary functions to examine and investigate the conduct of third parties who utilise public funds.

Expanding IBAC's jurisdiction in accordance with the Bill does not, of itself, engage any human rights. However, the expanded jurisdiction will mean that more individuals and a broader range of conduct will be subject to IBAC's scrutiny and investigative powers, consistently with the purposes of the Bill.

In my opinion, IBAC's expanded jurisdiction, as provided in the Bill, does not alter the way in which its existing investigative powers affect human rights protected by the Charter or remove the legitimate objectives of those powers.

I note that the human rights outlined in this statement may already have been affected or limited by the IBAC Act as it exists now. Previous statements of compatibility have concluded even where rights are limited any such limitation are reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter. The Bill does not affect those previous assessments. Moreover, even if it is considered that the Bill does affect or limit a human right, any such limitation would also be reasonable and demonstrably justifiable based on those previous assessments and the existing safeguards and limitations on certain IBAC powers in the IBAC Act. For example, any interference with the right to privacy in section 13

of the Charter arising from IBAC's exercise of its powers will still be lawful and not arbitrary. This is because IBAC would not be properly equipped to perform its statutory functions of identifying, exposing and investigating corrupt conduct without its investigative powers, including the power to hold public examinations.

Further, although the Bill lowers IBAC's investigation threshold, it does not remove any of the safeguards that apply to the exercise of the IBAC's powers. Therefore, for any new persons or bodies that may be subject to IBAC's powers, as a result of the amendments, the existing safeguards afforded to public bodies or public officers as currently defined in the IBAC Act will apply.

Existing safeguards under current sections 60(4) and 60(5) will also apply in relation to the transitional provisions. This will ensure that IBAC does not investigate conduct which occurred prior to commencement if, for example, it considers the conduct is trivial or is not satisfied that it is in the public interest to investigate the conduct.

Conclusion

I am satisfied that the Bill is compatible with the Charter and does not limit any rights in the Charter, for the reasons set out above.

The Hon. Anthony Carbines
Minister for Artificial Intelligence and the Digital Economy
Minister for Major Events
Minister for Medical Research
Minister for Racing
Minister for Economic Development

Statement of treaty compatibility

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (12:08): Under the Statewide Treaty Act 2025, I table a statement of treaty compatibility:

1. In accordance with section 66 of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* (Vic) (Statewide Treaty Act), I table a statement of Treaty compatibility for the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026 (the Bill).
2. In my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the matters set out in section 66(3)(d) of the Statewide Treaty Act. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the Bill

3. The Bill introduces amendments to the *Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011* (Vic) (IBAC Act) to expand the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission's (IBAC) jurisdiction to examine and investigate corruption.
4. The purpose of the Bill is to:
 - a. Broaden the definition of 'corrupt conduct' to enable IBAC to investigate conduct that would constitute a 'serious disciplinary matter' or any criminal offence, and
 - b. Expand the definitions of 'public body' and 'public officer' to enable IBAC to investigate suspected corrupt conduct of persons performing public functions on behalf of the State, when the conduct is linked to the expenditure or use of public funds.

Consultation with the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl

5. The First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl (Assembly) was provided with information regarding the Bill and an opportunity to advise on the Bill in August 2026. Following receipt of this information, the Assembly provided a response as follows:
 - a. Gellung Warl does not seek formal engagement on the proposed legislation at this time and supports the work of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission.

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

6. I have considered whether the Bill is compatible with the objects at section 66(3)(d) of the Statewide Treaty Act:
 - a. advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples
 - b. addressing the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation, and
 - c. ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples.

7. I note that the conduct of private First Peoples-led business and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOS) that may contract with government to deliver government services and provide a public function on behalf of the State may already be subject to IBAC's jurisdiction.
8. However, the amendments in the Bill are not directed at First Peoples, nor is it expected that any aspect of the Bill will, in practice, have a differential impact on First Peoples. The amendments apply uniformly to all bodies and officers within the IBAC's jurisdiction. There is a strong public interest in ensuring that public funds are utilised appropriately and in line with their intended purpose. As Victoria's premier anti-corruption body, it is integral that IBAC is afforded the necessary functions and powers to examine and investigate the conduct of third parties who utilise public funds.

Conclusion

9. In my opinion, the Bill does not affect the objects specified in section 66(3)(d)(i) to (iii) of the Statewide Treaty Act and is therefore compatible with each of those objects.

The Hon. Anthony Carbines
Minister for Artificial Intelligence and the Digital Economy
Minister for Major Events
Minister for Medical Research
Minister for Racing
Minister for Economic Development

Second reading

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (12:08): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Incorporated speech as follows:

I am pleased to introduce the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026 (Bill). The Bill amends the *Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011* (IBAC Act) to implement recommendations of the Integrity and Oversight Committee's (IOC) report into the adequacy of the legislative framework for IBAC to broaden the definition of corrupt conduct and give IBAC the ability to follow the money.

The government has made clear that integrity is not optional. The Bill makes important and immediate amendments to IBAC's jurisdiction to respond to strong public interest in ensuring public money is spent appropriately. However, the government acknowledges the amendments in the Bill alone will not address all the barriers identified with IBAC's legislation and the integrity system more broadly.

Victoria's integrity agencies form part of an interconnected system, and the legislative frameworks that establish their powers, duties and functions interact with one another in various interconnected ways. As such, a change to one agency's powers and jurisdiction is likely to have flow-on impacts across the entire integrity system.

That is why the Expert Reference Group, established by the government in response to the IOC's report, will continue to provide advice on implementing the outstanding recommendations supported by government. The Expert Reference Group will provide this advice to government by May 2027, to inform a second tranche of reforms for introduction in Parliament by the end of 2027.

The government is committed to continuing to work with Victoria's integrity agencies to ensure their legislation enables them to perform their important accountability and oversight functions.

I will now turn to the substance of the Bill.

Broadening the definition of corrupt conduct

The Bill brings forward implementation of the IOC's recommendation to lower the threshold of behaviour that meets the definition of corrupt conduct under the IBAC Act, to address the broader limitations with IBAC's jurisdiction identified by IBAC and the IOC and ensure the Bill gives full effect to the government's commitment to empower IBAC to consider the unlawful and unethical use of public funds on major infrastructure projects.

Currently under the IBAC Act, conduct must constitute a relevant offence before IBAC can commence an investigation. Relevant offence is currently defined in the IBAC Act as:

- an indictable offence against an Act; or
- any of the common law offences of attempting to pervert the course of justice, bribery of a public official, perverting the course of justice, or misconduct in public office.

Both IBAC and the IOC highlighted that this definition limits IBAC from investigating other integrity-compromising behaviours that do not involve a relevant offence – for example, IBAC cannot investigate serious misconduct in isolation, nor can it examine broader governance or systemic failures unless the conduct meets the threshold for a relevant offence.

To address this issue, the Bill makes amendments to lower the threshold of behaviour that can be considered corrupt conduct, to capture a broader range of criminal conduct and other integrity-compromising behaviour.

The Bill provides that the conduct at subsections 4(1)(a)–(e) amounts to corrupt conduct if it would constitute an offence, or a serious disciplinary matter.

To address feedback that the current definition of relevant offence limits IBAC from considering potential criminal conduct if the conduct does not constitute a statutory indictable offence nor one of the specified common law offences, the Bill removes the requirement that the conduct constitute a relevant offence and replaces this with *any criminal offence*. This ensures IBAC can consider a broader range of potential criminal conduct, including conduct by associated entities performing public functions.

The new second limb of the definition, ‘serious disciplinary matter’, is defined in the Bill as:

- any serious misconduct; or
- any other matter that constitutes or may constitute grounds for –
 - termination of employment, appointment or engagement (whether under contract or otherwise); or
 - a significant employment, appointment or contractual penalty or sanction; or
- a serious contravention of various codes of conduct applying to Members of Parliament (MPs), Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and local government councillors.

The inclusion of serious disciplinary matters will broaden IBAC’s jurisdiction to cover a wider range of unethical or integrity-compromising behaviours, even where they do not involve suspected criminal conduct. The new limb also includes specific coverage for serious breaches of certain codes of conduct to ensure elected officials who are not subject to a traditional employment, contractual or appointment relationship are held to the same standard as other public officers.

Importantly, while the amendments will result in a considerable expansion of the nature of conduct that IBAC can consider, the conduct will still need to satisfy the other requirements in section 4 to constitute corrupt conduct. Further, the Bill does not otherwise change the legislative requirement for IBAC to prioritise serious or systemic corrupt conduct – rather, it allows IBAC to consider a broader range of circumstances that may give rise to serious and systemic corrupt conduct.

Empowering IBAC to follow the money

The Bill will also clarify and expand IBAC’s jurisdiction to enable it to investigate allegations of corrupt conduct linked to the use of public funds and publicly funded projects, regardless of whether the funds are expended through public or private entities, where there is a connection between the alleged conduct and government funding.

Currently, corrupt conduct is defined in the IBAC Act with reference to certain types of conduct engaged in by, or affecting, a ‘public officer’ or ‘public body’. The definitions of public officer and public body already encompass any persons or bodies that are performing a public function on behalf of the State or a public officer or public body, including those under contract. However, there is some legislative complexity regarding what constitutes a public function. While the IBAC Act provides a non-exhaustive list of factors that may be considered when determining what is a public function, the fact that one or more of these factors are present does not necessarily result in a function being a public function.

IBAC and other stakeholders have raised challenges posed by bodies that deliver both public and non-public functions, noting that determining the extent to which it can investigate alleged conduct involving such a body or its officers, particularly where the allegations relate to both its public and non-public functions, can be difficult in practice.

To give effect to the government’s commitment to empower IBAC to follow the money, the Bill will amend the definitions of public body and public officer in the IBAC Act to include reference to ‘associated entities’,

drawing on the definitions in the *Audit Act 1994*. This will expand IBAC's jurisdiction to allow IBAC to investigate third party and private contractors where there is a link between the alleged conduct and government funding and give effect to the IOC's recommendation by adapting VAGO's information-gathering powers to support IBAC's investigative role and functions.

Importantly, the amendments in the Bill will not allow IBAC to investigate the mere use of public funds or other substandard, illegal, or unlawful conduct that is unrelated to the performance of public functions.

Consequential minor and technical amendments

The Bill also addresses a secondary issue identified by IBAC in relation to the definition of 'relevant principal officer'. IBAC identified that the IBAC Act contains a gap as not every 'public body' has a corresponding 'relevant principal officer'. To address this issue, the Bill makes consequential amendments to the definition of relevant principal officer to include the head of an organisation that qualifies as a 'public body'.

The Bill also makes consequential amendments to the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012* (PID Act) to provide that amendments to include associated entities in the definitions of public officer and public body in the IBAC Act do not apply to the PID Act. This approach is intended to avoid potential flow-on impacts to the PID scheme resulting from the inclusion of associated entity within the definitions of public officer and public body in the IBAC Act (which are adopted in the PID Act), noting the Expert Reference Group will consider broader reform to the PID scheme as part of its report to government.

Transitional provisions

Consistent with the government's commitment, the reforms will allow IBAC to look at certain conduct that occurred prior to the commencement of the Bill, subject to appropriate limitations.

The Bill includes transitional provisions that will allow IBAC to apply the reforms to conduct that:

- is the subject of a complaint or notification that IBAC received but has not determined to dismiss, investigate or refer before the commencement of the Bill;
- is the subject of a complaint or notification that IBAC had determined to investigate but had not completed investigating before the commencement of the Bill;
- is the subject of an own motion investigation that IBAC had commenced but had not completed before the commencement of the Bill;
- was not the subject of a complaint or notification to the IBAC that the IBAC had dismissed, referred to another person or body or completed investigating before the commencement of the Bill, or was not the subject of an own motion investigation that IBAC had completed before the Bill's commencement.

Importantly, the Bill does not enable IBAC to use the reforms to reopen or redetermine matters that it has already considered. The Bill makes minor amendments to ensure the additional criteria and safeguards for IBAC to be able to conduct investigations in relation to conduct which occurred entirely before the Bill commenced. This approach will ensure IBAC is empowered to use its resources effectively and adheres to the legal principle of finality.

Commencement

To ensure IBAC can utilise these important amendments immediately, the Bill provides for commencement on the day after Royal Assent.

However, as IBAC's jurisdiction will now extend to a wider range of conduct within a broader range of organisations, the Bill delays commencement of mandatory corrupt conduct reporting obligations under section 57 of the IBAC Act for associated entities that come under IBAC's jurisdiction as result of the Bill for a period of six months from the date of commencement of the Bill.

This approach has been requested by IBAC to provide it time to work with impacted agencies to raise awareness of their new obligations, while ensuring the reforms can otherwise commence in a timely manner.

I am proud to deliver these important reforms the operation of IBAC to strengthen the integrity and accountability of our institutions and the proper use of public funds.

I commend the Bill to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:09): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Inquiries Amendment (Special Prosecutor) Bill 2026*Introduction and first reading*

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (12:09): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Inquiries Act 2014 to establish a special prosecutor to assist the construction royal commission, to strengthen a royal commission's power to require information and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:09): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (12:09): The Inquiries Amendment (Special Prosecutor) Bill 2026 will establish the office of the special prosecutor to work in conjunction with the Royal Commission into the Integrity of Major Public and Civil Infrastructure Construction Projects in Victoria and will strengthen the royal commission's power to compel the production of information.

Read first time.

Ben CARROLL: Under standing order 61(3)(b), I advise the house that representatives of the other parties and independents have been provided with a copy of the bill and a briefing in accordance with the standing order. I will therefore move the second reading immediately.

Statement of charter compatibility

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (12:11): Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility:

Opening paragraphs

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

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

Overview

The Bill seeks to amend the *Inquiries Act 2014* (**Inquiries Act**) to establish the Office of the Special Prosecutor, led by an appointed Special Prosecutor, to work cooperatively and in conjunction with the Royal Commission into the Integrity of Major Public and Civil Infrastructure Construction Projects in Victoria (**Royal Commission**). The Royal Commission was established by the Letters Patent dated 20 August 2026, as published in the Government Gazette on the same date.

The Victorian Government undertakes major public and civil infrastructure projects on behalf of the Victorian Community. It is essential that such projects are conducted with the highest possible level of integrity and have the trust and confidence of the Victorian public. The Royal Commission was established to identify the nature and extent of corruption, criminal conduct and serious misconduct affecting Victorian government-funded construction projects.

A Royal Commission has no power to prosecute or compile a brief of evidence under the Inquiries Act. This is appropriate given the role of a Royal Commission as an inquisitorial forum, rather than adversarial forum with judicial or prosecutorial powers. However, the Royal Commission has the potential to uncover evidence of criminality and corruption.

The Special Prosecutor is intended to work in parallel to the Royal Commission to provide information to Victoria Police, the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission (**IBAC**), regulatory and licensing authorities, or other appropriate Victorian, Interstate, Territory and Commonwealth bodies, and for those entities to consider whether to take relevant actions in accordance with their functions.

The Bill will allow for information to be shared between the Royal Commission and the Special Prosecutor, and between the Special Prosecutor and relevant agencies, for this purpose as well as make other related minor and technical amendments to the Inquiries Act.

Human Rights Issues

In my opinion, the human rights under the Charter engaged by the Bill are the:

- right to freedom from forced work (section 11 of the Charter)
- right to privacy and reputation (section 13 of the Charter)
- right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association (section 16 of the Charter)

For the reasons outlined below, I am of the view that the Bill is compatible with the Charter because, to the extent that some provisions may limit human rights, those limitations are reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

Right to freedom from forced work

Section 11(2) of the Charter provides that a person must not be made to perform forced or compulsory labour.

The Bill will insert a new power for the Royal Commission to compel a person via a written notice to produce information or a statement in writing to the Royal Commission before a specified time and in a specified manner. This may require the creation of a new document outlining the person's knowledge or a document containing answers to specific questions.

As individuals will be compelled to prepare these documents or responses by law, it is conceivable that this new power impinges on the right to not be made to perform forced or compulsory labour.

Compulsion powers strengthen a Royal Commission's ability to be provided with, and consider, the full extent of evidence required to thoroughly investigate the matters it is tasked with under the Letters Patent. Individuals compelled to provide evidence, whether documents already in existence or the creation of new documents, do so in order to ensure that the Royal Commission considers all relevant evidence and information.

It is also arguable that responding to the exercise of a lawful compulsion power under the Bill falls within an exemption provided for by section 11(3)(c) of the Charter which states that forced or compulsory labour does not include work or service that forms part of normal civil obligations. Further, in circumstances where the individual considers that the Royal Commission has arbitrarily issued the notice compelling specified information, thereby impinging on their right to freedom from forced work, section 18 of the Inquiries Act provides an ability for the individual to make a claim to the Royal Commission that they have a reasonable excuse for failing to comply with the notice.

The Bill may engage the right to freedom from forced work; however, in my view any limitation is reasonable and demonstrably justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

Right to privacy and reputation

Section 13 of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with, and the right not to have their reputation unlawfully attacked.

The Charter contains internal qualifications on this right, being that interferences with privacy only limit the right if it is unlawful or arbitrary. An interference will generally be lawful where it is precise and appropriately circumscribed and will generally be arbitrary only where it is capricious, unpredictable, unjust, or unreasonable, in the sense of being disproportionate to the legitimate aim being sought.

The Bill establishes the Office of the Special Prosecutor, led by an appointed Special Prosecutor, who will receive information obtained by the Royal Commission under existing provisions in the Inquiries Act. The Bill includes amendments to the Inquiries Act to specify obligations relating to the confidentiality, sharing, and use of information obtained by the Special Prosecutor. The Special Prosecutor will be subject to the existing obligations, restrictions and exemptions that apply to Royal Commissioner officers. This includes subjecting the Special Prosecutor to confidentiality provisions under the Inquiries Act and prohibiting the Special Prosecutor from knowingly disclosing any information acquired during their appointment, except in prescribed circumstances.

The Bill will enable the Royal Commission to disclose to the Office of the Special Prosecutor any acquired information, including information received from regulatory and licensing authorities it considers relevant and appropriate for the performance of the functions of the Special Prosecutor under the Inquiries Act or any other Act.

These amendments will enable regulated flow of information obtained by the Royal Commission to the Special Prosecutor for the purpose of assessing whether it would be appropriate to provide that information to Victoria Police, IBAC, regulatory and licensing authorities, or other appropriate Victorian, Interstate, Territory and Commonwealth bodies, for those entities to consider whether to take relevant actions in

accordance with their functions. This is in accordance with the objectives of the Royal Commission as set out in the Letters Patent.

The Bill also includes amendments to the Inquiries Act specifying that any person who receives information from the Special Prosecutor during the Royal Commission's inquiry, must not take advantage of that information.

Once the Office of the Prosecutor ceases to exist, their records will be transferred to the Department of Premier and Cabinet or any other body determined by the Premier, such as the Department of Government Services. The information must be managed in accordance with existing information, privacy or public record laws. This includes the lawful handling, disclosure or transfer of such information, where appropriate, to the Public Records Office of Victoria.

The information held by the Office of the Special Prosecutor is likely to contain personal and identifying information of individuals involved in Victorian government-funded construction projects, including witnesses and other individuals identified by the evidence obtained and disseminated by the Royal Commission. The information could be damaging to an individual's reputation where there are allegations of corruption, crime or serious misconduct.

Further, the Bill inserts a new power for a Royal Commission to compel a person via a written notice to produce information or a statement in writing to the Royal Commission before a specified time and in a specified manner. The requested information may contain personal or sensitive information relating to the affairs of the compelled person, which may also be detrimental to their reputation.

However, to the extent that the Bill may interfere with the privacy of persons to whom the information or documents relate, the interference will not be unlawful or arbitrary. The interference will be prescribed by law and only shared for specific and limited purposes, as set out above. Further, the information sharing arrangements for the Construction Royal Commission are for a limited period and purpose. While the proposed compulsion powers will endure beyond the life of the Construction Royal Commission, they will arm this and future Royal Commission with the ability to obtain thorough and fulsome evidence upon which to conduct its inquiry.

Crucially, the sharing of information is necessary to support the Royal Commission's inquiry and enable the provision of information to relevant bodies for the purpose of identifying the nature and extent of corruption, criminal conduct and serious misconduct in relation to the major construction projects in Victoria. This will help to rebuild trust in the integrity of the major construction sector in Victoria.

The Bill may engage the right to privacy and reputation; however, in my view any limitation is reasonable and demonstrably justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

Right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association

Section 16 of the Charter protects the right to gather for a common purpose or to pursue common goals, such as protesting, gathering or meeting, whether in public or in private. This includes forming an industrial or trade union or similar group to protect common interests. The right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association is considered essential for the public expression of a person's views and opinions.

The Royal Commission will investigate allegations of corruption, criminal conduct and serious misconduct that have been alleged to have occurred in major public and civil construction projects. Such allegations include the manipulation and misuse of contracting arrangements and industrial processes to confer benefits on entities and individuals without legitimate or proper basis, misappropriation and wastage of public funds allocated to the delivery of projects, and the use of violent and intimidatory behaviours.

A wide range of industrial and trade unions have been involved in the development and delivery of Victorian government-funded construction projects. As a part of its inquiry, it is likely that the Royal Commission will investigate the involvement of specific industrial and trade unions. Consequently, information involving relevant industrial and trade unions may be shared with the Special Prosecutor.

It is not intended that the Bill will limit the right of peaceful assembly or freedom of association with particular industrial and trade unions. The Special Prosecutor will have the power to provide information to Victoria Police, IBAC, regulatory and licensing authorities, and other appropriate Victorian, Interstate, Territory and Commonwealth bodies about industrial and trade unions. Any provision of information from the Special Prosecutor, or consequential investigatory, prosecutorial or regulatory action taken, may lead to some individuals being deterred from joining the relevant industrial or trade union. However, such provision of information is necessary to prevent and mitigate the risk of corruption, crime and serious misconduct on major construction projects in the future and in doing so to protect the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

It is for this reason that I consider that the Bill is compatible with the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

Conclusion

Having considered all relevant factors, I am satisfied that the Bill is compatible with the Charter. To the extent that any rights are limited, the limitation is reasonable and able to be justified in a free and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

The Hon. Ben Carroll MP
Premier

Statement of treaty compatibility

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (12:11): Under the Statewide Treaty Act 2025, I table a statement of treaty compatibility:

1. In accordance with section 66 of the Statewide Treaty Act 2025, I table a statement of Treaty compatibility for the Inquiries Amendment (Special Prosecutor) Bill 2026 ('the Bill').
2. In my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the matters set out in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* (**Statewide Treaty Act**). I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the Bill

3. The Bill introduces amendments to the *Inquiries Act 2014* (**Inquiries Act**) to establish the Office of the Special Prosecutor to work cooperatively and in conjunction with the Royal Commission into the Integrity of Major Public and Civil Infrastructure Construction Projects in Victoria (**Construction Royal Commission**).
4. Proposed amendments to the Inquiries Act will:
 - 4.1. Establish the statutory Office of the Special Prosecutor, led by the Special Prosecutor.
 - 4.2. Prescribe provisions relating to confidentiality, sharing, and use of information obtained by the Special Prosecutor to allow information exchange with the Construction Royal Commission. This includes information acquired by the Commission from Victoria Police, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (**IBAC**), and other relevant persons or bodies.
 - 4.3. Enable a Royal Commission to compel the production of written information and statements that are not in existence at the time the notice to produce is issued.
 - 4.4. Make minor and technical amendments to the operation of the Inquiries Act.
5. The Bill will also make necessary consequential amendments to the *Inquiries Act*, the *Integrity Oversight Victoria Act 2011* and the *Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011*.

Consultation with the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl

6. The First Peoples' Assembly was not given an opportunity to advise on and did not make representations on the Bill, based on my understanding that it is unlikely to have a significant impact on First Peoples or Statewide Treaty.

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

7. I have considered whether the Bill is compatible with the objects set out at section 66(3)(d) of the Statewide Treaty Act:
 - 7.1. advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples (section 66(3)(d)(i));
 - 7.2. addressing the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation (section 66(3)(d)(ii)); and
 - 7.3. ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples (section 66(3)(d)(iii)).
8. The amendments do not on their terms deal with First Peoples, nor is it expected that any aspects of the Bill will, in practice, have a differential impact of First Peoples. As explained in the overview, the amendments to the Inquiries Act seek to establish a new Office of the Special Prosecutor to support the Construction Royal Commission, and make other necessary minor and technical amendments. It therefore does not affect the objects of the Statewide Treaty Act.

Conclusion

9. In my opinion the Bill does not affect the objects specified in section 66(3)(d)(i)–(iii) of the Statewide Treaty Act and is therefore compatible with each of those objects.

The Hon. Ben Carroll MP
Premier

Second reading

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (12:12): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Bill is an important step towards the Victorian Government's commitment to upholding integrity and uncovering misconduct in Victoria's construction industry.

The Bill seeks to amend the *Inquiries Act 2014* (**Inquiries Act**) to establish the Office of the Special Prosecutor, led by an appointed Special Prosecutor, to work cooperatively and in conjunction with the Royal Commission into the Integrity of Major Public and Civil Infrastructure Construction Projects in Victoria (**Royal Commission**).

The Victorian Government undertakes major public and civil infrastructure projects on behalf of the Victorian Community. It is essential that such projects are conducted with the highest possible level of integrity and have the trust and confidence of the Victorian public. The Royal Commission has been established to identify the nature and extent of corruption, criminal conduct and serious misconduct affecting Victorian government-funded construction projects.

The Royal Commission was established by the Letters Patent dated 20 August 2026, as published in the Government Gazette on the same date. The objectives and Terms of Reference are set out in the Letters Patent.

A Royal Commission has no power to prosecute or compile a brief of evidence under the Inquiries Act. This is appropriate given the role of a Royal Commission as an inquisitorial forum, rather than adversarial forum with judicial or prosecutorial powers. However, the Royal Commission has the potential to uncover evidence of criminality and corruption.

The Special Prosecutor is intended to work in parallel to the Royal Commission to provide information to Victoria Police, the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission (**IBAC**), regulatory and licensing authorities or other appropriate Victorian, Interstate, Territory and Commonwealth bodies to consider relevant actions in accordance with their functions.

The Bill will ensure that there is a dedicated, specialist resource working alongside the Royal Commission, so that when wrongdoing is uncovered, it is investigated and prosecutions pursued.

Given the complexities associated with legislating for a fully empowered Office of the Special Prosecutor, necessary reforms will be undertaken in two tranches. This Bill is tranche one of the reforms to establish the Office of the Special Prosecutor and provides scope for information sharing by and with the Special Prosecutor.

Tranche two of the reforms will be progressed in early 2027 to provide additional powers and functions to the Special Prosecutor, subject to consultation, and may include further information sharing, investigatory, and prosecutorial powers, and to make other consequential amendments as required such as amendments relating to the admissibility of evidence obtained by the Construction Royal Commission in subsequent legal proceedings.

I now turn to the details of the Bill.

Appointment of the Special Prosecutor

The Special Prosecutor will focus on ensuring that appropriate action can be undertaken by relevant law enforcement, integrity and regulatory bodies where evidence passed on from the Royal Commission indicates that further investigation and action could be taken to address instances of criminal or corrupt conduct and serious misconduct. The Special Prosecutor will do this by working in cooperation and collaboration with the Royal Commission to provide relevant information to the appropriate body for them to consider whether to take relevant actions in accordance with their functions.

This Bill provides the legislative vehicle to create the statutory Office of the Special Prosecutor in the Inquiries Act, consisting of one Special Prosecutor appointed by the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Premier following consultation with the Construction Royal Commissioner.

The Bill provides that the Special Prosecutor must be an Australian lawyer of at least 8 years' standing and provides for an initial appointment term of up to two years. This appointment may be extended by up to 12 months by the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Premier.

In the event that a Crown Prosecutor is appointed as the Special Prosecutor, the Special Prosecutor will have the right to return to their position as Crown Prosecutor for the remainder of their appointment term once they cease their role as the Special Prosecutor. If a Senior Crown Prosecutor is appointed as the Special Prosecutor, the Special Prosecutor will retain their pension entitlements and any other rights or privileges that the person may be entitled to as a Senior Crown Prosecutor.

To ensure independence of the role, the Special Prosecutor will not be subject to the direction or control of the Premier or any other Minister, in respect of the performance of their duties and functions and the exercise of their power.

The performance by the Special Prosecutor of their functions and the exercise of their powers will be carried out fairly and independently. The Special Prosecutor will remain a 'public body' for the purposes of the *Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011*, and therefore subject to oversight by IBAC.

The independence from government is central to public confidence in the Special Prosecutor's operations, as it will ensure that the performance of their functions is conducted without government influence.

Powers and functions of the Special Prosecutor

The Bill sets out the powers and functions of the Special Prosecutor in accordance with the Royal Commission's Letters Patent. The Special Prosecutor will have the power to do all things that are necessary or convenient to be done for, or in connection with, or as incidental to, the performance of their duties and functions.

The Bill will enable the Royal Commission to disclose to the Special Prosecutor any acquired information, including information received from regulatory and licensing authorities, it considers relevant and appropriate for the performance of the functions of the Special Prosecutor under the Inquiries Act or any other Act.

Under this Bill, the Special Prosecutor has the function to work cooperatively with the Construction Royal Commission to provide information to Victoria Police, the IBAC, regulatory or licensing authorities and other relevant bodies to consider relevant actions in accordance with their functions. This will streamline appropriate action being taken by relevant bodies where corruption, criminal conduct and serious misconduct is identified and help to rebuild trust in the integrity of the major construction sector in Victoria.

The Bill places important safeguards on the use of the information acquired by the Special Prosecutor. The Special Prosecutor will be subject to the existing obligations, restrictions and exemptions that apply to Royal Commission officers. This includes subjecting the Special Prosecutor to confidentiality provisions under the Inquiries Act and prohibiting the Special Prosecutor from knowingly disclosing any information acquired during their appointment, except in prescribed circumstances.

The Bill also includes amendments to the Inquiries Act specifying that any person who receives information from the Special Prosecutor during the Royal Commission's inquiry, must not take advantage of that information.

In exercising its powers and functions, the Special Prosecutor will be protected from legal liability, similar to immunities currently provided to Royal Commissioners and staff members of Royal Commissions under the Inquiries Act.

Removal of the Special Prosecutor

The Special Prosecutor may resign from the Office by delivering to the Premier a signed letter of resignation. The Bill also provides that the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Premier, will have the authority to remove a person appointed as the Special Prosecutor based on stipulated grounds. This includes the ground of misconduct, neglect of duty, inability to perform the duties of the office, or any other ground on which the Special Prosecutor is unfit to hold office.

During any vacancy in the role, the Governor in Council will be able to appoint a person to act in the Office of the Special Prosecutor on the recommendation of the Premier for a period of up to three months.

The Office of the Special Prosecutor will cease to operate six months following the tabling of the Royal Commission's final report. This will allow the Special Prosecutor to continue providing information to relevant bodies following the cessation of the Royal Commission, if required.

Power to compel information

The Bill will introduce new powers under the Inquiries Act for a Royal Commission, including the Construction Royal Commission, to compel the provision of information and/or statement. This will broaden existing powers under the Inquiries Act which only allow a Royal Commission to require the production of a document or things in existence at the time the notice to produce is issued.

The proposed amendments in the Bill will enable the Construction Royal Commission, and future Royal Commissions, to compel a person via written notice to give information or a statement, in writing, to the Royal Commission before a specified time and in a specified manner. This is intended to include information created from a person's knowledge in addition to information held in documents. This reform means that the Royal Commission can gather specific information by requiring a person to respond to questions in writing, to give specific written information and/or give a witness statement relevant to the subject-matter of the inquiry. These processes will ensure that Royal Commissions will be more efficient in gathering evidence. For example, a person can be required to give evidence in writing by responding to specific questions without the need to give oral evidence at a hearing, where the Royal Commission considers this is appropriate. These amendments will endure beyond the life of the Royal Commission and the Office of the Special Prosecutor.

Conclusion

The Bill ensures that the Special Prosecutor is empowered to perform their role and work cooperatively with the Royal Commission. It also provides the Commission with broader powers to acquire information relevant to its inquiry.

The Special Prosecutor will play a key role in increasing confidence in the integrity of the Victorian construction industry, ensuring that relevant information can be provided to appropriate bodies to consider relevant actions in accordance with their functions. The Royal Commission and the Special Prosecutor will represent another important step forward to ensure that the events that led to the Royal Commission can never occur again.

I commend the Bill to the House.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:12): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

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

The SPEAKER (12:12): General business, notices of motion 54, 55 and 75 and order of the day 4, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 5 pm today.

Petitions**Invasive species**

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) presented a petition bearing one signature:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the severe property and infrastructure damage caused by the unregulated planting of highly invasive, out-of-control, and structurally destructive flora in residential areas. Both exotic plant species (such as running and clumping bamboo, fishbone ferns, and Desert Ash trees) and certain aggressive native plant species can cause extensive structural displacement – breaking stormwater pipes, cracking house foundations, and destroying boundary fences. Current biosecurity and planning laws fail to protect suburban homeowners from these hazards, lack ongoing enforcement mechanisms, and do not hold owners legally or financially accountable when they plant high-risk species directly adjacent to boundaries without disclosing known structural risks.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly amends Victoria's environmental, building, and biosecurity laws to introduce a comprehensive containment, enforcement, and incentive framework for

destructive residential flora, requiring: restricting high-risk exotic and native species, prohibiting unpermitted deliveries, and mandating landlord consent; complete exemption for these species if grown exclusively within pots or sealed above-ground planters; prior municipal permit approval, mandatory certified root barriers, and reproductive containment protocols; risk-based compliance audits and council inspections with escalating monetary fines; mandatory neighbour notification if plants encroach, with original owners funding containment on the neighbour's side; strict civil penalties for the silent negligence of known structural risks; a government-funded suburban native plant replacement program rewarding cooperative property owners with free native flora alternatives.

Cranbourne and Pakenham rail lines

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) presented a petition bearing 2609 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of certain residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the House that recent rail service changes associated with the Metro Tunnel have removed East Pakenham and Cranbourne line services from the City Loop. Commuters from Melbourne's south-east cannot directly access key city stations, including City Loop and Richmond, without changing trains at Caulfield or Town Hall. This increases travel time, reduces accessibility, impacts airport travel, creates overcrowding during major events, disproportionately impacts residents, and increases congestion and environmental impacts.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to restore direct access for East Pakenham and Cranbourne Line Commuters to key city stations, including Richmond, Southern Cross and the City Loop.

Yarck–Gobur road

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) presented a petition bearing 75 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that Yarck–Gobur Road is a vital route linking Yarck, Terip, Ruffy, Creightons Creek and Euroa. Increased heavy vehicle traffic has placed significant strain on this narrow road, creating safety concerns for residents, school buses, emergency services and freight operators. Murrindindi Shire Council cannot fund the required upgrades without Victorian Government assistance.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to partner with Murrindindi Shire Council to fund safety upgrades to Yarck–Gobur Road.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Bushfire recovery

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) presented a petition bearing 603 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that bushfire affected property owners continue to face council rates on properties destroyed or severely damaged in the January 2026 bushfires, placing unnecessary financial pressure on families rebuilding their lives.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to provide three years of council rate relief for properties destroyed or severely damaged in the January 2026 bushfires.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Construction industry

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) presented a petition bearing 188 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that \$15 billion of Victorian taxpayers' funds have been lost to corruption on Big Build sites.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly immediately commence a royal commission into the \$15 billion of Victorian taxpayers' funds that have been lost to corruption on Big Build sites and seek to recover the money so we can deliver the projects Victoria desperately needs.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Camberwell police station

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) presented a petition bearing 90 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that the reduction in operating hours at Camberwell Police Station – now open only from 10am to 6pm, Monday to Friday – raises serious concerns about community safety and access to essential police services, especially for victims of crime.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to reverse its cuts to Camberwell Police Station's operating hours and give our hardworking local police officers and staff the support they deserve.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

North East Link

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe) presented a petition bearing 769 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that residents of Melbourne's north-east have endured decades of heavy truck traffic on Rosanna Road, Greensborough Road and surrounding arterial roads due to the absence of a direct freeway connection between the M80 Ring Road and the Eastern Freeway. This has caused significant impacts on local communities, including road safety risks, noise, air pollution, vibration, congestion and reduced amenity.

The North East Link, due to open in 2028, will finally provide a continuous freeway connection that enables through-freight traffic to bypass local roads in Banyule.

The petitioners note that the Victorian Government, through the Minister for Planning's 2019 Assessment of the North East Link project, recognised the need for further truck-management measures on local roads once the project is complete. The Government has also acknowledged the importance of protecting communities from heavy-vehicle impacts by implementing legislated No-Truck Zones and automated enforcement technology in Melbourne's inner west following the opening of the West Gate Tunnel.

North East Link was promised as a project that would remove thousands of trucks from local roads. That commitment must be delivered through permanent, enforceable truck bans from day one of opening.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly

1. Implement permanent 24 hour, 7 day 'No Truck Zones' on Rosanna Road, Greensborough Road and key arterial truck routes in Melbourne's north-east, except where trucks have a genuine local destination or are prohibited from using North East Link tunnels
2. Introduce automated camera enforcement and monitoring technology to ensure compliance
3. Apply truck management and enforcement consistent with that adopted for Melbourne's inner west, ensuring a consistent approach to truck management and community protection across Victoria; and
4. Implement these measures from the day the North East Link project opens.

Petitioners call for permanent, enforceable truck bans to ensure arterial roads are safer, quieter, and not used as freight bypass routes.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow on motion of John Mullahy.

Jeparit Weir

Emma KEALY (Lowan) presented a petition bearing 402 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the critical structural decline of the historic Jeparit Weir. Following a Hindmarsh Shire Council feasibility study, it has been confirmed that this 1902 infrastructure has reached the end of its operational life. The weir pool is an essential environmental and community asset that directly supports regional tourism, local wildlife ecosystems, and vital recreational activities for residents. Without immediate state-level funding intervention to fully replace and upgrade the structure, the town of Jeparit risks losing an invaluable asset, severely harming the local economy and regional liveability. Not only that, without action, the flora and fauna face an environmental crisis and the loss of our local ecosystems.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly provide urgent state infrastructure funding to the Hindmarsh Shire Council to fully restore, replace, and secure the future of the Jeparit Weir structure.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Data centres

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park) presented a petition bearing 73 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the need to stop the South Morang data centre developments at 525 and 535 McDonalds Road and 765 Plenty Road. The planning permit was granted on 12/9/2024 and further amendments approved on 2/6/25 and 30/10/25 with construction expected to begin in late 26 to early 27.

Many residents are concerned about the potential impacts of a large hyperscale data centre on the surrounding community and that they did not receive public notice or public consultation before planning permits were approved. Residents have concerns about water and electricity usage, environmental impacts, noise during and after construction and any potential health impacts on the community.

Residents are calling for greater transparency about the project, ongoing communication and public information sessions where the community can ask questions, clear information about traffic, noise, electricity, water use and environmental management, and careful consideration of the project's impacts on the community.

We are demanding answers and support from local councillors, local members of Parliament, and the Minister who approved the project.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to place an emergency moratorium on the South Morang data centre projects until further public transparency and consultation is received, including whether mandatory planning considerations were followed for amenity, traffic, flooding, vegetation, notice and infrastructure, and community consultation is conducted.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Narracan electorate battery energy storage systems

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) presented a petition bearing 274 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the rollout of proposed large scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) in regional communities.

Of particular concern are the projects named Bunyip North BESS and AMPYR/ Wimpole Battery.

Local communities have not had an opportunity to provide substantial feedback on these projects, and as a result, are deeply concerned with the impact they will have on local prime agricultural land.

There are a range of operational risks including site establishment, installation, commissioning, operation, decommissioning, remediation and rehabilitation phases of the project. Each of these phases pose unacceptable risk to the local environment and surrounding areas.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Premier, Minister for Energy and Minister for Planning to immediately intervene to put a stop to these projects, to ensure our prime agricultural farmland and Green Wedge Zones are protected.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Mirboo North-Trafalgar Road

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) presented a petition bearing 647 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the state of the Mirboo North-Trafalgar Road and that the area known as the “Thorpdale slip” continues to worsen due to a lack of investment in a permanent solution. The area is subject to constant movement which is pushing the critical road down the hill. Consequently, VicRoads are constantly required to rebuild the road using gravel and temporary solutions. This is a dangerous area for local road users, school buses, heavy vehicles and primary production vehicles that have no alternative route through the area. Thorpdale and the surrounding area is one of the most important primary production areas in our state with more than 70 per cent of brushed potatoes being transported through the area annually. The failure to permanently repair and upgrade this section of road is placing countless Victorians at risk every day.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to take immediate action by providing funding to deliver a permanent infrastructure solution to the area known as the “Thorpdale slip” on the Mirboo North-Trafalgar Road to ensure safety for road users and the local community.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

West Gippsland Hospital

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) presented a petition bearing 270 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the state of the West Gippsland Hospital and call on the Victorian Government to urgently commit to the planning, funding and construction of a new West Gippsland Hospital.

We believe the people of West Gippsland deserve access to a modern hospital that is safe, fit for purpose and capable of meeting the growing needs of our community now and into the future.

The current hospital facilities are under increasing pressure due to population growth, ageing infrastructure, increasing demand for health services and the need to provide appropriate care close to home.

A new Hospital would;

- Provide improved access to essential health services for local residents.
- Support emergency care, medical services and specialist treatment.
- Provide a safer and more suitable environment for patients, families and healthcare workers.
- Support the recruitment and retention of skilled health professionals.
- Ensure West Gippsland has healthcare facilities that match the needs of our growing region.

Many residents currently face long travel distances to access services that should be available locally. Delays in providing a new hospital risks placing further pressure on patients, families and healthcare workers.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly call on the Victorian Government and Members of Parliament to recognise the urgent need for a new West Gippsland Hospital and commit to a clear timeline for its delivery.

- Acknowledge the urgent healthcare needs of the West Gippsland Community.
- Commit to funding and progressing a new hospital development.
- Provide a transparent plan and timeline for delivery.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Water policy

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) presented a petition bearing 87 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that the long-proposed Big Buffalo Dam near Myrtleford has never been comprehensively reassessed despite growing demands for water security, environmental water storage, renewable energy generation, and regional economic development. The land for the project was acquired in the 1960s to preserve the opportunity for future construction. Given Victoria's increasing water challenges and the need for additional renewable energy storage, there is a strong public interest in undertaking a modern, independent feasibility study to assess the project's potential benefits and impacts. The study should assess the project's technical, economic and environmental feasibility, including its potential to improve long-term water security, provide environmental water storage, support downstream water users, enable hydroelectric and/or pumped hydro energy generation and storage, and deliver broader regional economic and community benefits.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to work with the Federal Government to commission a comprehensive, independent feasibility study into the construction of the Big Buffalo Dam near Myrtleford through the National Water Grid Authority, or a similar Commonwealth-funded body.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Bus route 534

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) presented a petition bearing 1300 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the need for an improved service on bus route 534, which runs from Glenroy Station to Coburg, through Hadfield, Pascoe Vale and Coburg North. The 534 bus provides access to the Craigieburn and Upfield Train Lines, five secondary schools, several sporting and recreational facilities, a large retirement village, the Glenroy and Coburg Major Activity Centres, and Neighbourhood Centres at West Street Hadfield, Gaffney/Sussex Streets Coburg North, and Merlynston Station. The 534 bus service runs every 30 minutes on weekdays and every 40 minutes on weekends. The area is experiencing significant population growth, and the frequency of train services on the Upfield and Craigieburn Lines is being improved to provide better public transport options. However, the frequency of bus services has not improved. Many local residents live two kilometres or more from a train station, with buses such as route 534 providing this important link. A frequent 534 bus service would make it much easier for residents to use public transport. This would reduce the cost of living and help address road congestion and car parking constraints.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to improve the frequency of services on bus route 534 to every 15 minutes.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Pascoe Vale North Primary School

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) presented a petition bearing 1039 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of certain residents of the State of Victoria draws the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the staged Master Plan that's been developed by the Pascoe Vale North Primary School (PVNPS) community to inform future capital improvements. The Plan's identified the construction of a covered outdoor learning area (COLA) with new court surfacing as the highest priority Stage 1 project. PVNPS is a vibrant school of 350 students and 40 staff, supporting a diverse community, including many families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, who benefit from inclusive, accessible and weather-protected school spaces. A COLA would support students' access to regular and reliable whole-school assemblies and enhance sport, health and wellbeing, recreational and learning outcomes.

A COLA capable of accommodating whole-school gatherings and all-weather physical education would also help support the school and the broader Pascoe Vale North community to hold more out-of-hours events, initiatives and opportunities and meet the school's need to provide safe and inclusive spaces for community activities.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to provide funding support for the construction of a covered outdoor learning area and new outdoor surface at Pascoe Vale North Primary School.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Coburg Primary School

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) presented a petition bearing 549 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the need for investment, modernisation and upgrades at Coburg Primary School (CPS) to support new, inclusive, fit-for-purpose and accessible learning environments for the whole school community. As one of the oldest and continuous public schools in Victoria, first established in 1853 and still utilising many of its early buildings, the school's home to a proudly diverse and growing community of 337 students and 36 staff, accommodated across two campuses separated by Bell Street, with a junior southern campus for Foundation to Grade 1 students, and a senior northern campus for Grade 2 to Grade 6 students. Situated in the heart of the Central Coburg Activity Centre, many existing buildings and facilities are increasingly challenged in meeting the expectations and demands of a modern learning environment, including accessibility, amenity, safety, operational and capacity needs. As an important step towards future upgrades, CPS has shared in \$10 million of statewide planning funding secured through the 2025/26 Budget to develop a Concept Master Plan. This plan focuses on addressing existing maintenance, occupational health and safety, enrolment growth and facilities challenges and constraints.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to provide investment to deliver Coburg Primary School's Concept Master Plan and support the community's vision for new and refurbished indoor and outdoor learning facilities, and modernisation and upgrade works at this important school that supports a growing and changing community.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Pascoe Vale electorate road safety

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) presented a petition bearing 1414 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly Murray Road (and Gaffney St) between George St, Preston and the Upfield Shared Path at Batman Station, Coburg, which is one of the most hazardous stretches of road in Melbourne's north. This corridor is a high-risk arterial which is experienced as hostile by the many vulnerable road users. Its four undivided 60 km/h lanes, blind crests and curves produce a serious-injury crash rate more than 150% higher than parallel Bell Street. Residents documented 30 crashes in 2025 and at least 10 more in early 2026. This corridor is used by children walking

and cycling to local schools and childcare centres – yet it has no protected bike lanes or median refuges, so pedestrians must cross four lanes of fast traffic. Repeated crashes also destroy bus shelters and traffic signals at significant cost to the community. Whilst locals welcome the first 40km/ph school speed zone being implemented along a section of the corridor, much more action through physical infrastructure is needed to make this road safer for all.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly take a corridor-based approach, and fund and deliver new physical infrastructure to make Murray Road safer for all. This should include: reconfiguring the road from 4 through-lanes to 1 each way to physically separate traffic from pedestrians and cyclists; pedestrian refuges and new safe crossings; wider separated paths and footpaths for people walking, cycling and using scooters; safer speed limits consistent with the Government's own State Speed Zone Policy and the installation of road safety cameras. These engineering changes will reduce dangerous driving, better protect the vulnerable road users who rely on this road, and prevent further deaths, injuries and costly damage.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Visy, Reservoir

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) presented a petition bearing 178 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of certain residents of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the offensive odours originating from the Visy papermill on Radford Road, Reservoir. The odour is linked to bacterial activity in the mill's recycled water systems. The heat and chemicals used in Visy's recycled water operation produce sulphides and volatile fatty acids, giving off a horrific chemical smell, once released into air through ventilation stacks. Residents report that the odour, described as "choking blood and bone", has persisted for decades and has significantly impacted their quality of life. An urban planning expert says Victoria's industrial zoning laws are outdated and operations like Visy's papermill may no longer be appropriate so close to housing. Visy admits there is no simple solution, it will take time to get the combination of odour management strategies right. Visy has built higher ventilation stacks and increased the velocity of water vapour discharge to improve dispersion, reduce the intensity of the odour at ground level. These alterations have not been effective to reduce or eliminate the stink. Visy's approach is perceived as slack, dismissive, even callous.

Action:

The petitioners request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to ensure that EPA Victoria imposes further odour control requirements on Visy in Reservoir, including urgent action to reduce/eliminate offensive, (mental and physical) health affecting odours, increase field odour surveillance to ensure compliance and demand the papermill be moved to a different industrial site, away from residents.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Residential tenancies

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) presented a petition bearing 171 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that the current allowances under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 for continuous, comprehensive video recording during routine property inspections constitute a severe and disproportionate invasion of tenant privacy. Property managers and agents are increasingly using video sweeps not to log structural maintenance, but to audit a tenant's standard of everyday tidiness. This penalizes model tenants for standard, "lived-in" environments, transforms family homes into active surveillance zones, and compromises the fundamental right to quiet enjoyment

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly amends the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to: explicitly prohibit continuous video sweeps of occupied properties during routine inspections; restrict digital documentation exclusively to high-resolution static photography of specific, identified structural defects or maintenance items; and strictly ban the filming or photography of undamaged personal spaces, furniture, or living areas solely for the purpose of assessing a tenant's housekeeping or neatness.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Neighbourhood houses

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) presented a petition bearing 6578 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that Neighbourhood Houses funding has failed to keep pace with costs and in real terms is 20% lower than it was in 2010. Funding no longer meets employment costs, leaving Neighbourhood Houses with no funding to keep the lights on. For the past three years, half of all Neighbourhood Houses have recorded a loss.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly urgently meet the requests of Neighbourhood Houses Victoria's 2026 budget submission by restoring funding in real terms for Neighbourhood Houses through a 25% increase, fund the 25 Neighbourhood Houses that do not currently receive any ongoing funding, and develop a fund for the establishment of 20 additional Neighbourhood Houses in growth areas.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

*Committees***Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee***Alert Digest No. 12*

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (12:16): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 12 of 2026, on the following bills, together with appendices:

Corrections Amendment Bill 2026 – house amendments

Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity and Production Notices) Act 2026 – house amendments

Domestic Gas Choice (Repeal of Gas Appliance Ban) Bill 2026

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Functions) Bill 2026

Local Government Amendment (Stability of Councils) Bill 2026

Local Government Legislation Amendment (Stronger Communities) Bill 2026

Local Government Legislation Amendment (Stronger Communities) Bill 2026 – house amendments

Ordered to be published.

Electoral Matters Committee*Inquiry into Voting Centre Accessibility*

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (12:17): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Electoral Matters Committee on the inquiry into voting centre accessibility, together with appendices and transcripts of evidence.

Ordered that report and appendices be published.

*Documents***Documents**

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Audit Act 1994 – Financial Audit of the Auditor-General and the Victorian Auditor-General's Office 2026 (three documents)

Auditor-General – Report 2025–26

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission – Report 2024 to the Attorney-General under s 464ZP of the *Crimes Act 1958* – Ordered to be published

Major Events Act 2009 – Major Sporting Event Order for the NFL Game – San Francisco 49ers v Los Angeles Rams to be held at Melbourne Cricket Ground – 11 September 2026

Melbourne Cricket Ground Trust – Report year ended 31 March 2026, together with the Minister's reported date of receipt and an explanation for the delay

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

Alpine – C65

Cardinia – C289

Gannawarra – GC218

Glen Eira – C279

Greater Dandenong – C252

Greater Geelong – C484

Hobsons Bay – GC276

Maribyrnong – GC276

Melton – C244, C256

Mitchell – C155

Swan Hill – GC218

West Wimmera – C37

Whitehorse – C268

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996 – SR 117

Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 – SR 116

Spent Convictions Act 2021 – SR 118

Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 – SR 119

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 116, 119

Victorian Local Government Grants Commission – Allocation report year ended 31 August 2026.

Bills

Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (12:19): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026 and the Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026.

Multicultural Victoria Amendment Bill 2026

Council's amendments

The SPEAKER (12:19): I have also received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Multicultural Victoria Amendment Bill 2026 with amendments.

Ordered that amendments be taken into consideration later this day.

*Business of the house***Joint standing orders**

The SPEAKER (12:19): I have received a message from the Legislative Council rescinding joint standing order 25 effective from 1 December 2026, with which they request the agreement of the Legislative Assembly.

Ordered that message be taken into consideration later this day.

Resolutions of continuing effect

The SPEAKER (12:20): I have received a further message from the Legislative Council – they have been busy – rescinding the resolution of continuing effect regarding the Parliamentary Integrity Adviser effective from 1 December 2026, with which they request the agreement of the Legislative Assembly.

Ordered that message be taken into consideration later this day.

*Bills***Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2026****Corrections Amendment Bill 2026****Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026****Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026****Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026****Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2026****Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026***Royal assent*

The SPEAKER (12:20): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, the Corrections Amendment Bill 2026, the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026, the Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026, the Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026, the Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2026 and the Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026.

*Business of the house***Standing and sessional orders**

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Artificial Intelligence and the Digital Economy, Minister for Major Events, Minister for Medical Research, Minister for Racing, Minister for Economic Development) (12:21): I move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended today to allow the Speaker to interrupt business at 6 pm and the members for Croydon and Rowville to make valedictory statements for a maximum of 15 minutes each.

Motion agreed to.

*Motions***Motions by leave**

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (12:22): I move, by leave:

That this house notes that children flying kites in Gaza have been threatened with military action by Israeli defence minister Israel Katz and that there should be no further evidence needed for Victorian Labor to cut ties with Israel.

Leave refused.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (12:22): I move, by leave:

That this house calls on the privatised Port of Melbourne and Victoria Police to immediately cease interfering with protected industrial action by workers at Quantem fuels in West Melbourne and calls on the billion-dollar multinational Quantem to stop strikebreaking and negotiate a fair deal with workers and their union the MUA.

Leave refused.

*Business of the house***Program**

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Artificial Intelligence and the Digital Economy, Minister for Major Events, Minister for Medical Research, Minister for Racing, Minister for Economic Development) (12:23): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following items be considered and completed by 5 pm on 10 September 2026:

Budget papers – motion

Effect of spending cuts on hospital pipeline – motion

Conspiracy theories – motion

Neale Daniher AO – motion

Community leaders – motion

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026

Inquiries Amendment (Special Prosecutor) Bill 2026.

In kicking off on the business program, can I also acknowledge the honourable members for Rowville and Croydon. We do look forward to hearing from them this week as part of clipping the ticket on the government business program with valedictory speeches this week. We look forward to hearing from them about the particularly significant contributions they have made over very many years. They will join several other members, including the member for Sydenham and several others, who will also be giving their valedictory speeches through this week, as I understand.

The business program is of course about integrity, and it is about the Premier keeping his promises to Victorians and leading by example. On the first day in the job the Premier was very clear on committing to making integrity not negotiable. He committed the government to establishing a royal commission into corruption in Victoria's construction sector. That is exactly what we are doing and what has been outlined by the Premier this morning. We are not taking our time with that; we are moving as quickly as we can, with the support of others in this place, to move quickly to debate on those matters. We will be establishing a special prosecutor to make sure that the work of the royal commission will lead to proper accountability.

The royal commission will have exhaustive powers to root out corruption and clean up our building industry. But a royal commission does not have the power to lay charges or to prosecute, so we are establishing the office of the special prosecutor, a dedicated resource with a commission to ensure that where wrongdoing is established there are consequences. Consequences matter. We will also be

making important changes to the powers of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, including a new broader definition of ‘corruption’ and follow-the-money powers to enable investigators to root out corruption wherever they find it. Victorians expect public money to be spent responsibly, and they also expect their government to be transparent and accountable, and that is what the Carroll Labor government will deliver: a government that cares about working families and respects every dollar.

This week we will also be debating a number of motions, including a motion on the effect of the Leader of the Opposition’s plan to make \$11 billion in cuts and how that will affect our health system and the pipeline of new hospitals – particularly in my own electorate, where we are in the middle of a significant investment of \$275 million for a new and expanded emergency department at the Austin. Only a Carroll Labor government really cares about working families. That means investing in health services, not cutting them. It is also about making sure that we are putting PSOs in shopping centres, not guns in our emergency departments and hospitals.

Further, we will also be debating a motion to recognise and thank our community leaders across Victoria for their steadfast commitment to a safe, united and multicultural Victoria, because our government, the Carroll government, is one government that is for all. Our government rejects the politics of division and the grievance politics that we have seen from One Nation, and we know there are some in this place who could form government only if they get into bed with One Nation.

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

The SPEAKER: Leader of the House, come back to the motion before the house, which is the government business program.

Anthony CARBINES: Things are a little bit touchy around here, but I accept that ruling, Speaker.

James Newbury: On a further point of order, Speaker, the member is reflecting on the Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order.

Anthony CARBINES: That was clearly not the case, Speaker. We are getting on and doing for working people, but I do want to say that I am looking forward with the confidence and the tick of approval that we have received from across the community and from across stakeholders to the establishment of the royal commission into the building industry established by Premier Carroll and the further work that has been brought forward to this Parliament through the second-reading speech and the bill that has been made available to the house today so that we can move quickly to debate around additional powers for IBAC. That is critically important. I do recall that oversight and integrity matter a lot in this place and to you, Speaker. A very long time ago the integrity and oversight minister from those opposite had to resign. Such was the level of integrity and oversight that their minister responsible for the establishment of an anti-corruption commission had to resign his position.

I am really confident that we will make sure that we have a discussion on these matters and a debate on these matters over the course of this week and that we will expedite this bill and see that IBAC has the additional powers and the follow-the-money powers that it needs to hold people to account in our community. It is a Carroll Labor government that has brought these matters forward. We will put these matters to a vote later this week, and I am pleased that those across the chamber have determined to bring these matters on forthwith so we can debate them as part of the government business program throughout the week.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:28): Though we do not support the government business program for the reasons that I will outline in a moment, we do strongly support IBAC getting the powers that they have been calling for, the powers that, as the Leader of the House alluded to, Victorians would expect IBAC to have. Our concern, which we will deal with in the substance of the debate, is that this bill does not do that. We will get to debate on that throughout the week. I would note that in relation to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment

Bill 2026 and the Inquiries Amendment (Special Prosecutor) Bill 2026 we have been amenable at all times to assist with the facilitation of those bills through the Parliament quicker.

When it comes to the government business program that we have before us, currently the program lists those bills for debate throughout the week with a guillotine on Thursday. We have made it clear to the government we would have enabled those bills to be moved across to the Council sooner because we so strongly support IBAC getting the powers they need. I put that offer again in this place to the government and say there is no reason to keep the bill in this chamber for three days, other than mismanagement of the chamber. It would be a better thing to take this bill across to the Council and get it done quickly, because if you want this bill done quickly there is a mechanism to do that. We have seen that in other weeks with other bills whereby certain bills could be guillotined earlier – perhaps this evening or tomorrow – and therefore that would enable the bill to move across to the Council sooner so that the Council could perhaps debate it on Thursday. I put that offer again to the government. As the Leader of the House said himself, and I pick up the point of his debate, these two bills that have now been listed on the government business program are about integrity, and we will get to the substance of that debate. What has become clear is those bills do not cover what IBAC has actually been asking for, and we will get into the substance of that debate throughout the second-reading speech process on the bill. It is now clear that what IBAC has asked for by way of power is not included in the bill that is being put forward to the Parliament – a shameful con, some might say, and as I have said.

In relation to the other matters that are listed on the government business program, as the Leader of the House has said, there are a number of motions. A number of those motions are meritorious, we have no issue with them and we will facilitate them through the chamber. But there are some that are simply old raw politics – sledging motions, as I have come to call them – which are simply the worst of politics and frankly a waste of this chamber's time. They are about cheap pointscoreing. It is disappointing that we see them on the government business program. We do not believe they should be on the government business program, and in fact I think at the end of the day all it does is reflect poorly on a government who clearly do not have their priorities aligned with Victorians and what they would expect us to be debating. We believe that it reflects on the government, and that is why you can see Victorians with such strong views about the poor performance of this government.

Though we support IBAC, I say again to the Leader of the House that we would support those two bills going to the Council sooner – we would be more than happy to see that done – and we support the principle of those bills in terms of the powers that they provide. It is the sledging motions specifically on the government business program that are of great concern and I think are a disappointment for Victorians, which is why we cannot support the government business program. As the Leader of the House said, we look forward to the very many valedictory speeches. As the member for Rowville said, he does not know how he is going to get through 32 years in 15 minutes, but we will all be here tonight to see it.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon) (12:33): I am delighted to make a contribution on the government business program, and I do so as the hour of my parliamentary demise beckons, because I must say I used to love the government business program. I think it is fair to say some of my best work in this place occurred in the debate. I do recall –

Mathew Hilakari interjected.

Danny PEARSON: Well, I enjoyed myself before your time, young fella. I do want to thank the whip for giving me the opportunity to speak on this. It was always good fun, I must confess, the debating style that occurred in the chamber, particularly with Robert Clark. I thoroughly enjoyed debating Robert on these matters.

The motion before the house is, again, something very important. We have made it very clear, as the Leader of the House did in his contribution, that it is about making sure that we can have the

opportunity to bring forward the IBAC bill as well as the work for the special prosecutor. I think that is important. Again, we will have that opportunity for these bills to be properly canvassed and reviewed in the course of the week before they are dispatched to the other place for consideration.

As often reflects this time in the electoral cycle, it is a good opportunity for those members who wish to make valedictory speeches to do so. The members for Rowville and Croydon will be up tonight. My good friend the member for Sydenham will be up tomorrow night. It is a good opportunity for members to have that chance to talk about their contributions, particularly the member for Rowville. The first opportunity I had to vote against the Liberal Party was against the member for Rowville when he was a candidate – he was not the member – for Wantirna in the 1992 state election. I voted against him. Clearly, the overwhelming majority of the people of Wantirna felt differently, and I think my aged appearance indicates how long ago that was.

I am particularly pleased that members of the house will have an opportunity to make contributions on Neale Daniher and his contribution. In so doing it is important to note the contribution of Mike Schneider. Mike Schneider is the chair of FightMND. Mike was a very good friend of Neale's. Mike is an outstanding business leader as CEO of Bunnings; he announced recently that he will be standing down in January as the CEO of Bunnings. Mike has been an outstanding representative of the business community. He is a thoroughly decent person and a very good friend of mine, so it will be good to acknowledge his contribution as well.

Again, as I said to the whip, I do appreciate the opportunity to speak on this motion before the house. What I always found interesting with the government business program is that people would sometimes struggle with its narrowness – the fact that it is quite a narrow procedural debate where you are talking about the forms of the house. But if you are creative and if you are imaginative, then you have the opportunity to wander down many a wondrous rabbit hole. It is somewhat self-indulgent, I think it is fair to say. Certainly –

Richard Riordan interjected.

Danny PEARSON: At least some of us on this side of the house have aspirations for the finer things, the richer things, the more wondrous things, the intellectual pursuits in life, unlike others who may wish to use this as an opportunity to sledge the good work of a good government.

I was drawn back to a contribution where I said, 'Ceterum existimo enim quod est per se bonum et progressivum imperium' – 'Furthermore, I consider that good and progressive government is essential' – and that is a view that I have always adhered to as a member of this house. It is certainly very fortunate for someone like me to have been a member of this house and to have always been able to speak in favour of a government business program. That is reflective of having, clearly, longevity in office. It has been fun. It has been a great privilege. It has been a great pleasure. It has been wonderful for the house to have indulged me in some of my whims and my somewhat tangential contributions, but it has been a lot of fun. On those notes, I suspect this is my last government business program. I do commend it to the house, and thanks for the memories.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (12:38): I rise to talk on the government business program. It is great to follow the member for Essendon. Sometimes in the chamber he has wandered down some of those paths to educate us all about how parliaments work not only here but around the world. It is terrific, with all our MPs that are leaving Parliament, that we are going to have those valedictory speeches come through this week. I am sure that we will all be happy to come in and listen.

We have the member for Rowville and the member for Croydon tonight, and we look forward to that time when we can all listen to how Parliament has evolved over time, or maybe how it has not evolved. I look forward to the member for Rowville doing that tonight. Tomorrow obviously we have the member for Sydenham. The member for Gippsland East – I look forward to his contribution. I am sure that it will have its funny points, and I am sure most members in this house will not be spared some of

his indulgences that he has seen over the journey. The member for Malvern is on tomorrow night as well and then, to my left, the member for Shepparton on Thursday. We look forward to all of those.

As the member for Brighton said, even though we are opposing the government business program, we are not opposing the fact that the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026, which the Premier stood in this chamber before and spoke about, and the Inquiries Amendment (Special Prosecutor) Bill 2026 have come into here for us to debate today and all this week before they are guillotined on Thursday. I would also like to urge the government to let us push it through, have our debate and send it to the other place to go through, because I think every Victorian and every member here in the chamber understands just how critically important it is for IBAC to have those powers at their disposal. I am sure we will have members on either side stand and speak to that as we move forward. With the special prosecutor as well we have some legislation that we need to move to give the special prosecutor powers to be able to move forward with the IBAC investigation. As we well and truly know, people – no matter where they are, everybody's constituents right around Victoria – have been asking for this. The Premier stood in this place and said he will be making sure that IBAC get the powers that they do need, so it will be good to be able to drill down and actually find out what powers they are going to have moving forward.

Also in the notice paper items, as we spoke about before, we have budget papers. I know a lot of MPs on our side have stood in the chamber and spoken on notice paper item 3, the budget papers motion. I am sure that as we move through, the ones that have not will get to their feet. Notice paper item 4 is about the effect of spending cuts on the hospital pipeline. This is where these sledge motions that we talk about start to come in. Even though they are on the notice paper, are we doing a disservice standing in this chamber and talking about these sledge motions and wasting our time when we could be talking on more important stuff? Notice paper item 5 – conspiracy theories. Notice paper item 6, as the member for Essendon said, is talking about Neale Daniher AO. I think we all stand, and have done, in solidarity about the wonderful contribution Neale made to our community, especially about MND as he has pushed that into the face of everybody and we now talk about that more. Notice paper item 7 is a motion on community leaders. As I said, we will be opposing the business program this week.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (12:43): It is a great pleasure to rise this afternoon to make a contribution in favour of the government business program for this week, a government business program that is incredibly important for all Victorians and that, as always when we are in this place, will make the lives of working Victorians better. It was disappointing once again to come into this place this afternoon and learn that the opposition will be opposing the government business program, particularly this week, with the two incredibly important pieces of legislation that are on it. They go to the heart of what this government stands for –

Members interjecting.

Dylan WIGHT: It is hard to hear myself thinking with the National Party branch meeting going on in front of me here. Perhaps those in the National Party could go to the phone box down the road and hold their branch meeting in there.

The SPEAKER: Member for Tarneit, through the Chair, and come back to the government business program. The member for Mildura will cease interjecting.

A member interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: I will be here, yes, absolutely. To go to the contents of this government business program – like I said, incredibly important contents that they are – we have got the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026, which will give IBAC the follow-the-money powers that it needs to be able to conduct the business of IBAC in the way intended and in the very best way possible. It will also amend the definition of 'corrupt conduct' to capture a broader range of criminal conduct and other integrity-compromising behaviours. They talk a big game, the opposition, when it comes to integrity and when it comes to IBAC. I will note, though, that the

credibility of the opposition leader in this space has been compromised without a shadow of a doubt during these conversations and during this debate –

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

The SPEAKER: Member for Tarneit, come back to the government business program, please.

Dylan WIGHT: Thank you, Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition, who some time ago –

The SPEAKER: Member for Tarneit, come back to the government business program.

Dylan WIGHT: Of course, Speaker. As I said, they are incredibly important pieces of legislation. The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026 will make sure that IBAC has the powers to conduct investigations as it needs to when there is suspected corrupt conduct, when there are referrals to IBAC and when there is incredibly important work to do. I would on that point just like to credit the fantastic work that IBAC does and that it has done in the past.

The Premier said that the first thing he wanted to do was establish a royal commission into what has happened in Victoria's construction sector. The next bill, the Inquiries Amendment (Special Prosecutor) Bill 2026, goes to the heart of that. The Premier said that he would establish a royal commission, and that is exactly what he has done. But royal commissions, as we know, whilst incredibly important, are inquisitorial by nature – they are information-gathering operations – and a royal commissioner does not himself have the power to prosecute. So it is incredibly important to move legislation in this place this week and debate it and pass it very shortly, hopefully, through this house and then through the other place, to make sure that alongside that royal commission stands a special prosecutor so that if it is clear through that process that evidence heard is of a criminal nature and there are prosecutions to be laid then that can be done in the most timely fashion. It is an incredibly important piece of legislation.

The member for Morwell also went to some of the motions on the notice paper. I thought I would just speak very briefly on the motion on Neale Daniher AO. We obviously have our great friend the member for Pakenham in here also affected by MND. Neale Daniher is a Victorian legend, as is the member for Pakenham, so I just want to mention that as well.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (12:48): It is a great pleasure to talk on the government business program, my first contribution on such a matter for this 60th season, and of course it is a ripper, the second-last one of this current regime. That is the one big upside of having an opportunity to speak today. It is the second-last time from this side of the chamber, one would hope. I reference the member for Essendon, who said in his contribution only moments ago that 'good and progressive government is essential', and I agree wholeheartedly with him. The great people of Victoria will have that opportunity in not so long a time to make sure that they do have a fresh start with a good and progressive government. So it is my pleasure to make a contribution for the second-last time.

This government business program, this drivel that has been served to the Parliament and the people of Victoria this time, could not be more exemplified than by the legislation coming through. The new Premier has come out and said that he is not Dan Andrews and he is not Jacinta, and none of us believe him. We have facts as to why not to believe him, because the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026, which we will be debating this week – and of course this side of the house is absolutely hanging out to have this debate about improving IBAC. But lo and behold, can you believe it, the legislation that we are going to debate this week says, 'We won't talk about Premier Dan and we won't talk about Premier Jacinta. No, we're going to conveniently leave that bit of history out.'

The SPEAKER: Member for Polwarth, be careful about anticipating debate.

Richard RIORDAN: I take that. Thank you, Speaker. Heaven forbid that I anticipate the nonsense that will come from the other side of the chamber.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Polwarth, I make rulings without them being reflected on.

Richard RIORDAN: Thank you, Speaker. We have that to look forward to: a piece of legislation that will conveniently cut huge swathes out of what might interest the people of Victoria to understand – for example, where their \$15 billion went. It might also be used to investigate why the crumbling train lines of Polwarth, where we have had 10,000 less seats available to the people of Polwarth for the last couple of years and where can no longer have food service –

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance to the procedural debate before the house, I would have thought the opportunity for the substantive debate on the government business program, given those opposite are opposing the business program, will come at some later point today.

The SPEAKER: I remind the member for Polwarth that this is a very narrow debate. I understand this is your first contribution on this matter, so stick to the very narrow debate, member for Polwarth.

Richard RIORDAN: I appreciate your wise guidance, Speaker. I note that the point I was trying to make to the minister at the table is that, instead of debating the issues this week that the people of Victoria really want to hear about, we are going to have motions, for example, that say things like ‘That this house commends the Carroll Labor government for committing’. No-one in Victoria ever said, ‘Thank you, we want to commend this government for the \$15 billion that has been stolen or the train lines that have been made defunct.’ No, that is not what the people of Victoria want to do. The people of Victoria want to know that we are assembling, for this second-last time in this chamber, to actually make sure that there is transparency, good governance and openness about the way we transact business in this state. That is what we would hope to debate.

There will be a little bit of an opportunity for further discussion on budget papers. That will be an opportunity to air the theft and the misleading of the Victorian public. I refer specifically to the Auditor-General last week, and there will be another opportunity to again have a look at the budget papers, because we learned last week that the budget papers that we will have an opportunity to talk about this week do not in fact have the secret tax in them. We wonder why that would be. That would be an opportunity to talk about that.

The other thing the government wants, instead of allocating time to talk about how we can make the state better, is to spend time debating conspiracy theories. That is a very odd one – whose conspiracy theories, what conspiracy theories? That is something this government, in its dying days, wants to talk about, conspiracy theories, not what is best for the people of Victoria and not what is best for this state.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (50): Juliana Addison, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D’Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (28): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Anthony Marsh, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O’Brien, Michael O’Brien, Kim O’Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

*Members statements***Peter Katsambanis**

Rachel WESTAWAY (Pahran) (12:59): I rise with great sadness to reflect on the passing of my dear friend, local Prahran resident and political icon Peter Katsambanis at age 60. He leaves behind his beautiful wife Karalee and five wonderful children and his mum, their yiayia. My family and I were so grateful to have known Peter for many years on many levels: as a 20-year colleague on and off in Commonwealth tribunals, through our extensive family ties with our children attending school together and through a love of the Liberal Party. My leader Jess Wilson, along with former Labor ministers, provided respectful commentary, demonstrating a bipartisan tribute to this great Greek Australian.

Peter was a fierce political fighter, an advocate for Hellenism, a wonderful husband and father and – his only vice – a one-eyed Collingwood supporter. He was and always will be quintessentially Prahran. Schooled at Windsor Primary, Prahran High, then Melbourne High, he had a sharp intellect and a degree in commerce and law from Melbourne Uni. He was one of only two people ever elected to two Australian state parliaments.

He became my inaugural chief of staff, setting both me and my office up before tackling his health issues. He was my friend, my confidant, who encouraged me to run for Prahran. He and his family helped me win the seat at the 2025 by-election. I am grateful to Karalee and his children for affording me the chance on his last day to say, ‘Thank you. I love you, and I am so grateful for everything.’ He said back to me, ‘I love you. Just win.’ Prahran was part of his world.

Felicitations

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (13:01): There are very few things we can guarantee in life, including being here in December for all of us, but I have been written off before, so you never know, I may just be back to bother you all. What I can guarantee, though, is that being in this place is the greatest privilege of my working life. Before we finish up for the term I just want to give a thanks to the very good people of the Ashwood district and before that the Mount Waverley district – the Ashwood district going forward – for the grace that they have had in giving me this great privilege. But there are many others that make this work – my wife, for instance, and my three wonderful kids Sophie, Lindsay and Sam – and I give them thanks for putting up with all this and, while we are at it, my wonderful staff Lisa Williams, Chunying Liu, Matt Baker and Margo and everyone who got us on the way. It is a great amount of work that gets us here with the great privilege to serve our people, and I aim to continue to do it for a very long time.

I also want to give a very quick shout-out to my Ashwood youth advisory committee, whose names I am going to have to do next week because I am running out of time. They are coming in to speak to the Deputy Premier today about their plans for financial literacy in the curriculum, which is an amazing amount of work they have done, and I know they are going to put on a very good policy decision for the Deputy Premier.

Peter Katsambanis

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (13:02): I first met Peter Katsambanis when I was a student at Melbourne University. Peter was into heavy metal, and he had the long hair and black T-shirts to go with it. You might even say that Peter looked a little intimidating back then, if not for the kindness that you could clearly see in his eyes. That I met this devoted metalhead at a meeting of the Liberal club was only the first time that Peter would surprise me, because that was the thing about the Kat – despite setbacks in life, he never wavered from the things he believed in. He joined the Liberal club because he was rightly outraged by compulsory student unionism on campus.

Family mattered to him. In Peter's maiden speech as the newly elected member for Monash Province in 1996 he paid tribute to the influence of his Greek migrant parents. Peter lost his election in 2002,

but he kept showing up. A move to Western Australia saw him elected to the Legislative Council in 2013, shifting to the Assembly in 2017, where he served as a senior shadow minister. Peter's parliamentary career came to an end in 2021, but he never stopped fighting for freedom. He never stopped his love of Collingwood or South Melbourne Hellas. He never stopped being proud of his Greek heritage, and he never stopped the love of his family – his greatest achievement. My condolences to Peter's wife Karalee and his children Ross, Andrew, Angelica, Zoe and Nikkie. Vale, Peter Katsambanis, the most solid of solid citizens.

Gisborne Secondary College

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon) (13:04): What a pleasure it was to welcome Premier Ben Carroll for the official opening of the trades hub at Gisborne Secondary College. This fantastic \$5.8 million facility is another significant investment in Gisborne Secondary and, most importantly, in the future of our young people. The new trades hub provides students with modern purpose-built spaces where they can learn practical skills, work with their hands and explore pathways into trades, apprenticeships and further vocational education. It was built by local Raysett Constructions, who are from Riddells Creek. I have already had the opportunity to see students working in these spaces, developing skills in areas including carpentry and discovering the satisfaction that comes from learning, making and creating.

We know that young people learn in different ways and have different ambitions. A great education system must give every student the opportunity to find a pathway where they can thrive. A facility like the trades hub gives students the chance to develop real-world skills while they are still at school and opens their eyes to the many rewarding careers available across trades and technical industries. I am incredibly proud to see this project completed and officially opened. Thank you to acting principal Suzie Harrison, school captains Charlie Francis, Zakk Papadopoulos and Erica Cawood, as well as teachers, staff and the entire Gisborne Secondary College – and a shout-out also to our fantastic Labor candidate Annette Death, who joined us there on the day.

Volunteers

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (13:05): I rise today to pay tribute to the volunteers who support our communities each and every day of the year, whether they are helping out at the local charity op shop, at Vinnies, the Salvation Army, Red Cross or any other social charity, or the CWA, Apex, Lions, Rotary or other service clubs, at the local footy and netball club, soccer, cricket, basketball or hockey club, as parents at gymnastics or doing important environmental work like our Field & Game volunteers. But particularly I want to thank emergency services volunteers, including CFA, SES, Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, ambulance community emergency response team members and others. These volunteers put in countless hours training, planning, preparing and responding to emergencies in our communities. It is time away from their families, their workplaces and their farms spent backing their communities, keeping us safe and literally saving lives and properties. Our CFA volunteers in particular play such a large part in virtually every community across Gippsland South – indeed right across the whole state.

Country Fire Authority Foster brigade

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (13:06): In my own patch the Foster CFA continues its long wait for a new fire station, one that I have been campaigning for for at least a decade. We have a site identified near the former Foster railway station and a long-term lease arrangement in place for construction but no money from the Labor government to build a new station. Captain David Jones and his team have been very patient. They are putting up with an old, out-of-date station that means they cannot get upgraded appliances because newer trucks simply will not fit. It is so small that it is not safe for them to get changed for a job while trucks are moving in and out. It is time that changed.

Ghilgai Steiner School

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (13:07): I was delighted to visit Ghilgai Steiner School for the sod turn of a refurbishment works project which our state government has proudly invested in. Ghilgai provides a unique and nurturing learning environment for local families, and these upgrades will help ensure students continue to learn and thrive at their beautiful school.

Storm preparedness

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (13:07): I was honoured to join the Minister for Emergency Services at the VICSES Emerald unit to announce new supports for SES volunteers and launch the Are You Storm Ready? initiative. Our SES volunteers give so much of their time to keep our community safe, often in challenging circumstances, and we are proud to support their vital work. The Emerald unit responded to 930 incidents last storm season – it is the state's busiest unit – and we can all help them by being storm ready: clearing gutters, securing loose items and trimming back overhanging branches. Thanks to them now and always.

Country Fire Authority Emerald brigade

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (13:08): It was a pleasure to attend the Emerald fire brigade's annual presentation night. The dedication of this 85-year-old brigade's volunteers is truly inspiring. Special congratulations to Graeme Legge AM on an incredible 75 years of service, having joined the CFA at the age of 15. On behalf of the people of Monbulk, I extend sincere thanks to him for his lifetime of commitment to his community.

Macclesfield Landcare Group

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (13:08): Congrats to the Macclesfield Landcare Group on celebrating its 30th anniversary. For three decades members have worked tirelessly to protect local waterways, native vegetation and wildlife habitats, helping preserve our natural environment for future generations.

Greenlife Industry Victoria

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (13:08): It was wonderful to welcome Monbulk growers from Ausflora, Biemond Nurseries, Fleming's, Speciality Trees and Warners Nurseries to Parliament for the Greenlife Industry Victoria showcase in Parliament – everyone's favourite week in Queen's Hall.

Peter Katsambanis

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:08): I was saddened to learn of the passing of Peter Katsambanis, a friend and a fellow Liberal who gave his working life to the public service on both sides of the country. Peter served the people of Monash Province in the Victorian Parliament and then went on to represent Northern Metropolitan Region and Hillarys in Western Australia. A proud son of the Greek community and a great friend of the Jewish community, Peter never forgot where he came from and worked tirelessly to strengthen ties between Australia and Greece. My thoughts are with his family – Karalee and his five children Ross, Nicolette, Andrew, Angelica and Zoe – at this difficult time. Vale, Peter Katsambanis.

Caulfield Volunteer Awards

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:09): For 13 years my office and Caulfield Park Bendigo Bank have run the Caulfield Volunteer Awards, and it is a pleasure to be able to announce another one which we will be launching next month. The bank donates \$13,000 as sponsorship to the various Victorian Caulfield local heroes that do so much for our community. I am looking forward to celebrating that again. The Caulfield Park Bendigo Bank has been in existence for 21 years and has given over \$4.4 million to the community. That is what Bendigo Bank and community banking is all about.

Jewish New Year

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:10): As we approach the Jewish New Year, I wish the Jewish community a shana tova – a happy new year. It has been a very difficult few years, particularly since 7 October; we are approaching our third year. Can I just say, each and every week we have the Greens bringing their hate into this Parliament, and enough is enough.

Y Rowing Club

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (13:10): The Y Rowing Club is housed within the boat bays on the ground floor of the Lakeside Pavilion function centre at Albert Park Lake in Melbourne. The club was founded in 1910 to provide rowing opportunities for women, and I am happy to say it is still thriving today. I was so pleased to be able to attend with them an official launch of their renovated club site, pursuant to a government grant that was executed through Parks Victoria. It is wonderful to see, on the one hand, them keeping fit and being able to row around the beautiful Albert Park Lake, but also the kinship that is expressed. The new renovated facilities mean that they are able to connect more easily. It is more welcoming and accommodating, but they also have the gym equipment there too. That was really lovely and lovely to get to know them as well.

Krishna Janmashtami

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (13:11): It was also a pleasure to be able to attend Krishna Janmashtami, the celebration of Lord Krishna's birthday at the ISKCON temple in Albert Park. I will pay credit to the ISKCON temple. They were able to facilitate literally thousands of people to come and pay their honour and respect. There was singing, there was fasting, love, kindness, compassion, beautiful values and sharing, and I should say that they feed thousands of people every week – very generous. So I want to commend their generosity but also their facilitation of such a beautiful celebration and unity of spirit.

State election

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (13:11): The Nationals are ready to get on with the job of strong and stable government, with a positive plan to rebuild regional Victoria. The Nationals will fix our roads, investing \$5 billion to repair and rebuild our state road network, plus \$288 million for local country roads and bridges. The Nationals will tackle crime, with 3000 additional police, tougher bail and sentencing laws and consequences for repeat offenders. The Nationals will rebuild regional health care, attracting more doctors, nurses, midwives and other allied health professionals and getting mental health reform back on track. The Nationals will build more homes, cutting red tape and unlocking land so young people and families have a better chance to buy a home or build their dream home and renters have more affordable choice. The Nationals will ease the cost of living, scrapping Labor's emergency services tax and unlocking our plentiful conventional gas reserves to deliver affordable and reliable energy to keep our power bills down. But that is not all: through the Nationals' fair share guarantee, the 25 per cent of Victorians who live in regional Victoria will finally get the 25 per cent of new infrastructure investment that we deserve. These are the things country Victorians tell us that matter: better roads, safer communities, better health care, more homes and lower costs. The Nationals are ready to govern, we are ready to rebuild regional Victoria and we are ready to deliver country Victorians their fair share.

Coburg High School

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:13): On 31 August I was delighted to welcome Senator Jana Stewart to visit Coburg High School to check out the progress of the school's landmark \$17.8 million technology hub. With works well under way and much of the final fit-out and finishing touches now being applied, the building will create capacity for an additional 250-plus students and deliver world-class spaces for woodwork, design, textiles, food tech, media studies, podcasts, a radio room and much more, including magnificent new landscaping. Thank you to Trent McCarthy, the

school council president; Brent Houghton, the principal; and the whole school community for the very warm welcome.

Antonine Sisters Early Learning Centre

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:13): On 3 September I was also honoured to welcome the Minister for Children Minister Blandthorn to visit the new and upgraded Antonine Sisters Early Learning Centre in Barrow Street, Coburg. First opened in 1986, this magnificent \$3.2 million project has been made possible by a \$688,000 Victorian Labor government investment. It is providing modern, new, early childhood, indoor and outdoor learning facilities spaces and amenities for children, families and staff. There are 25 extra places, boosting capacity from 50 places to 75 places. Thank you so much to all who made us welcome: Sister Mariette Kareh, the director of the centre; Sister Rita; Joseph Kairouz, the managing director of Samssons Projects; Chahid Kairouz, architect of CKA Studio; and all the staff, families and children.

Outer Urban Projects

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:14): Thank you to Kate, David, Rahila and Irine from Outer Urban Projects for welcoming me in August for the \$400,000 creative enterprise grant announcement. Based out of the Oxygen youth hub, they support more than 500 young people, 620 creative performances, 600 artistic workshops and reach audiences of 48,000 people from across the north.

Suburban Rail Loop

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (13:14): Victorians under Labor are the highest taxed people in the country, but Labor wants more: a secret tax on every bus, train and tram user under this Labor government. But Labor were caught out by the auditors for whacking every public transport user for the past two years with a secret tax that they never told the Victorian people about – a tax that was projected to add more than \$60 a week to public transport fares and raise \$8 billion from Victorian public transport users, much of which Labor planned to funnel to their unfunded Suburban Rail Loop on the corruption-ridden Big Build. It is just so corrupt. The now Premier Carroll was the Minister for Public Transport in 2021 when this secret new tax was approved under Daniel Andrews and Jacinta Allan. Victorians deserve lower taxes, not for their government to hike taxes in secret. The Carroll Labor government is addicted to taxing hardworking Victorians, making the cost of living for families harder, and the secret public transport tax was just the tip of the iceberg. Now new documents expose Premier Carroll and Labor for plotting new taxes on every family home, with up to \$110 every year on every Melburnian household to fund the SRL, and paying consultants to find new ways to tax suburban families more. You cannot trust a government that taxes you in secret. Only the Liberals will restore integrity and budget honesty and lower taxes for Victorians.

Footscray electorate electricity infrastructure

Katie HALL (Footscray) (13:16): I rise to express my serious concern regarding a shocking example of corporate arrogance in my electorate. The recent installation of 15-metre concrete poles through established residential streets in Yarraville and West Footscray by Jemena has been delivered with a complete disregard for residents. I was only made aware of the 15-metre concrete poles when distressed residents started contacting my office, not through any engagement from Jemena. Residents report they were given little opportunity to understand the scope of the works before construction began, only receiving perfunctory notifications of infrastructure upgrades and lengthy power outages. I have just received notification of another 10-hour outage on Sunday the 20th. Some residents were told the project involved upgrades to existing poles rather than the substantial new structures that followed.

I am also concerned about Jemena's engagement with the City of Maribyrnong. Jemena advised me in writing that they had engaged with council and shared plans with no objection or comment received back. I have since been advised by council that this is incorrect. Infrastructure of this scale which

permanently alters the character of established neighbourhoods should not proceed without meaningful engagement with affected communities and local government. On behalf of my constituents I am calling on Jemena to make this right. They should take out the infrastructure they have installed and put it underground.

Climate change

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (13:18): The major parties have completely failed us on climate change. For years they have wilfully ignored warnings from scientists, and now we are all paying the price. Melbourne has just had its hottest winter on record, and now we are being warned to brace for a horror summer with extreme fire and flood warnings and a super El Niño. And yet, in the face of these warnings, Labor has approved five new fossil fuel projects in the past year. The Liberals and One Nation are even worse. They want to open up more coal, gas and logging and rip up renewable energy projects. So we have Labor, the Liberals and One Nation who all support more fossil fuels even though they know that this will destroy Victorian communities.

We already have large parts of Victoria that are virtually uninsurable and are becoming unliveable. Do ministers not see what just happened in Nepal? Over 1300 people are dead from a collapsing glacier. I actually honestly do not know what it will take for Labor and Liberal MPs to stop approving new fossil fuel projects. Maybe they think they will be immune to the impacts of climate change with all the money they earn from the cushy gas industry lobby jobs that they will get when they leave Parliament. But when Victorians face the next fire, flood, crop failure or insurance premium hike, they will be asking what Labor and Liberal MPs did to protect them. Those MPs will have to look Victorians in the face and say they did worse than just sitting on their hands; they actually actively poured fuel on the fire by opening new fossil fuels.

Quang Minh Temple

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (13:19): Only Labor will back our multicultural communities in Melbourne's west and ensure they have the facilities they need. Quang Minh Temple is getting \$4 million under a re-elected Carroll Labor government. That is the largest Buddhist temple in Australia, and it attracts thousands of people every year from different community groups. This investment will fund their redevelopment plans and build a brand new, state-of-the-art, fit-for-purpose community hall. Whether you are Vietnamese, Indian, Chinese, Burmese, Taiwanese or Tibetan, or even a member of our Buddhist community, you will benefit from these new facilities.

There are thousands of folks across my electorate in Melbourne's west who attend this temple, and they are absolutely excited for this to happen. Most importantly this builds upon the continued support that our government has invested for folks in our Vietnamese community right here in Melbourne's west. We are just a month away from opening Australia's first-ever Vietnamese museum, because only Labor will defend and back in our diverse multicultural and multifait communities across Victoria. We will not indulge in nonsense about monocultures or police what is and is not Australian. No matter who you are, where you are, where your family comes from or how you choose to pray, you belong here in Victoria.

Portland mental health services

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (13:20): Portland is facing a mental health and addiction crisis that can no longer be ignored. Nineteen local women – mothers – desperate to save their children have formed an online support group because Portland lacks the mental health and drug and alcohol services their families need. Between them these women have lost nine children to suicide or overdose – yes, nine children. In the past fortnight alone, Portland has lost another two young people. Portland's suicide rate is 45 per cent higher than that of any other Victorian town. Susan Roll has courageously told how her son once sought help and was handed a sticky note with a telephone number. When he called he reached a Melbourne triage service and was told he faced a 14-week wait. After a decade of Labor, a royal commission and endless promises, what has Portland received?

Nothing. Labor has raised \$1 billion each year through its mental health levy, yet it has been revealed that this money has been absorbed into base funding instead of being delivered as additional investment – a despicable betrayal by Labor. A Jess Wilson Liberal government will deliver \$40 million through a rural health workforce scheme, offering mental health and allied health professional grants to relocate and incentivising them to stay. We also need the Lookout residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre that Labor refuses to fund. Portland does not need another promise, it needs professionals, treatment and rehab services that save lives.

Point Cook electorate transport infrastructure

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (13:22): I am pleased to report on another milestone being reached in Point Cook, on the Point Cook Road and Central Avenue intersection. The lights are on, and it is a much smoother and safer ride for our community, removing the multiple roundabouts that were in place that made that section of road dangerous for our community. It is now safer. I walked across the road via the first pedestrian crossing that we have had in that area I think ever. It is work that should have been done 30 years ago and that we are getting on with today. I can also let people know in the community that I represent that we will be closing the exit towards Altona Meadows and refurbishing that from mid-September – 13 September in fact. Then we will be getting on with duplicating Central Avenue, and we should have done this – Werribee council should have done this when they bought up the properties at that time. But we will get on with that job with the support of the federal government. I thank them for that support. Next, if Labor is re-elected at this election, we will be duplicating Point Cook Road from Central Avenue all the way through to Dunnings Road. This is what the community that I represent have been calling for for a long time, and I am so glad that we will be delivering this, just like we did the lights at Sneydes Road – that intersection was so dangerous before – which is safer to get through and faster to get through for our community. And there is more: at Williams Landing station we have just introduced the lift and the Parkiteer so we have bikes kept safely at the site.

Lara electorate early childhood education and care

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (13:23): Last week was another busy week delivering for the residents of the Lara electorate. I was very pleased to announce that the Victorian Labor government is delivering over \$100,000 to Lara Kindergarten as part of our Building Blocks inclusion grants. This grant will fund the Lara kinder to redevelop their outdoor play area, creating a more inclusive, accessible play-based space for all children. This is designed to remove physical barriers to participation and ensure that all children can engage meaningfully in play-based learning. This is in addition to the brand new kinder we announced recently that will be built in Lara West, because every child deserves the very best chance to learn, play and grow in a great local kinder.

Six Ways intersection, Lara

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (13:24): I am excited to announce that works are about to begin on the Lara Six Ways intersection. This project will improve road safety, traffic flow and crossing options for pedestrians and cyclists. The upgrades will replace existing single-lane roundabouts with traffic lights, add new signalised pedestrian crossings at the intersection and pedestrian crossings on Flinders Avenue and Kees Road, remove the right-hand turn from Kees Road onto Patullos Road, remove the right-hand turn from Flinders Avenue onto Station Lake Road and the right-hand turn from Station Lake Road onto Flinders Avenue, add additional lanes at the intersection and relocate the pioneers memorial and the public toilet block. These changes will help reduce congestion and make getting around Lara much safer and smoother for everyone. As Lara continues to grow, there is one thing that is clear: this state Labor government is backing local residents and delivering the infrastructure that Lara needs.

Dental services

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (13:25): I was pleased to recently welcome the Premier to the Narre Warren urgent care clinic alongside the member for Narre Warren North and Cr Stefan Koomen, who is the Labor candidate for Narre Warren South. The visit was in support of the recent announcement that a re-elected Carroll Labor government will deliver 10 free dental clinics across the state. We met some of the hardworking nurses and GPs to discuss how important local urgent care clinics are for families in the outer south-east – a model, I have to say, we are seeing replicated across the country. The free dental clinics will work in the same way as these urgent care clinics that have been rolled out. You will be able to walk in and get the care you need without a bill and without an appointment.

We spoke to some fantastic dentists and nurses there. They know how vital dental health is for people's overall health, but they also know the strain that it can put on a family household budget. For too long the cost of dental has been a barrier for people getting the care that they need. Free dental clinics will shake up that system and will provide free urgent dental care, from general check-ups to emergency situations. I know that many people across my electorate are looking forward to the dental care clinics to get the health care they need, which only a Labor government will deliver.

Mulgrave Football Club

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (13:26): It was fantastic to attend the annual Mulgrave Football Club business lunch, bringing together local sponsors and business leaders to support this growing club. Themed around Melbourne's NFL week on the eve of the AFL finals, the event featured special guest Ben Graham, former Geelong star and the first Australian to play in an NFL Super Bowl. Gathering for events like this just highlights why Melbourne remains the world's most livable city and such a wonderful place to call home. I congratulate the club, the president Ash Tilyard and all local sponsors investing in our grassroots sport.

Springvale Benevolent Society

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (13:27): The Springvale RSL hosted its annual fundraiser gala night proudly supporting the Springvale Benevolent Society. All funds raised directly assist our most vulnerable community members, including those experiencing homelessness, victims of family violence and single parents in crisis. The society has served our region for over 64 years under the compassionate leadership of president Joe Rechichi, his wonderful wife Teresa and a dedicated team of volunteers. I thank everyone involved for their enduring dedication.

Australian Multicultural Food and Dance Gala

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (13:28): I recently also attended the Australian Multicultural Food and Dance Gala evening hosted by the National Liaison Council of Australian Chinese Incorporated. The celebration brought people of all backgrounds together to commemorate this historic milestone alongside the traditional Mid-Autumn Festival.

Reservoir High School

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:28): I would like to congratulate Reservoir High School on a fantastic performance last week of *Rock of Ages*, the 1980s glam metal musical. In doing so I would like to recognise that it is not always easy for our government schools to put on school productions, especially Broadway musicals. In fact our parliamentary intern this year Nanami Zen of Monash University wrote a very good policy paper looking at the significant cost of those shows, the fact that there is no dedicated funding stream and the fact that they often rely extensively on unpaid volunteer time from school staff.

I do want to thank all the students and especially the staff involved in Reservoir High's fantastic show. A particular shout-out to the rock band: Otto Divitaris on drums, Aiden Jakupi and Michael Brewer on guitar, Zac Jakupi on keys, Zoe Lyon and Daniel Luttick on bass and Yicheng Chen on lead guitar.

I think you would appreciate, Deputy Speaker, my good friend former Wallaroo Tegan French, a staff member there, on the keyboards with the big 80s synth sound. Amongst the cast performances, a shout-out to the driving energy of Bixie Woolford and in particular to Arshman Ahmed and Yrel Guzman, who played star-crossed lovers Drew and Sherrie and put on my personal favourite performances of Poison's *Nothin' but a Good Time* and Foreigner's *Waiting for a Girl Like You*. Well done to Patrick Murphy and all of the cast and crew.

Bills

Multicultural Victoria Amendment Bill 2026

Council's amendments

Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:

1. Clause 1, line 5, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
2. Clause 1, line 8, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
3. Division heading preceding clause 4, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
4. Clause 4, line 8, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
5. Clause 4, line 17, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
6. Clause 5, page 4, line 22, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
7. Clause 5, page 4, lines 25 and 26, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert –

"Multicultural and Multifaith Victoria means Multicultural and Multifaith Victoria established by section 6;"
8. Clause 7, line 14, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
9. Clause 8, line 17, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
10. Clause 8, line 18, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
11. Clause 8, line 19, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
12. Clause 9, line 26, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
13. Clause 9, line 27, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
14. Clause 10, line 9, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
15. Clause 10, line 10, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
16. Clause 10, line 12, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
17. Clause 10, line 28, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
18. Clause 10, page 10, line 8, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
19. Clause 10, page 10, line 20, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
20. Clause 10, page 10, line 23, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
21. Clause 11, line 9, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
22. Clause 11, line 12, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
23. Clause 11, line 15, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
24. Clause 11, line 21, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
25. Clause 12, line 22, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
26. Clause 12, line 25, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
27. Clause 12, line 28, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
28. Clause 13, line 29, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
29. Clause 13, line 33, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".
30. Clause 13, page 12, line 3, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
31. Clause 13, page 12, line 7, after "Multicultural" insert "and Multifaith".
32. Clause 14, line 11, after "**Multicultural**" insert "**and Multifaith**".

33. Clause 14, line 20, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
34. Clause 14, page 13, line 9, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
35. Clause 14, page 14, before line 1 insert –
“(2A) The Minister must not recommend a person for appointment as the Multicultural Coordinator General if that person held a position or office referred to in subsection (2)(a) to (e) in the previous 12 months.”.
36. Clause 14, page 15, after line 21 insert –
“(3A) The Minister must not recommend a person for appointment as a Deputy Multicultural Coordinator General if that person held a position or office referred to in subsection (3)(a) to (e) in the previous 12 months.”.
37. Clause 14, page 16, line 24, after “**Multicultural**” insert “**and Multifaith**”.
38. Clause 14, page 16, line 29, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
39. Clause 14, page 17, line 15, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
40. Clause 14, page 17, line 23, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
41. Clause 17, page 18, line 13, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
42. Clause 17, page 19, line 15, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
43. Clause 17, page 19, line 17, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
44. Clause 17, page 19, line 21, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
45. Clause 18, line, 7, after “**Multicultural**” insert “**and Multifaith**”.
46. Clause 18, line 9, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
47. Clause 18, line 11, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
48. Clause 18, page 22, line 12, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
49. Clause 19, line 22, after “**Multicultural**” insert “**and Multifaith**”.
50. Clause 20, line 25, after “**Multicultural**” insert “**and Multifaith**”.
51. Clause 20, line 27, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
52. Clause 20, line 29, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
53. Clause 20, page 23, line 1, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
54. Clause 20, page 23, line 9, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
55. Clause 20, page 23, line 13, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
56. Clause 20, page 23, line 14, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
57. Clause 21, line 18, after “**Multicultural**” insert “**and Multifaith**”.
58. Clause 21, line 21, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
59. Clause 21, line 27, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
60. Clause 21, line 29, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
61. Clause 21, line 32, after “**Multicultural**” insert “**and Multifaith**”.
62. Clause 21, page 24, line 5, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
63. Clause 21, page 24, line 9, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
64. Clause 21, page 24, line 13, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
65. Clause 21, page 24, line 17, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
66. Clause 21, page 24, line 26, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
67. Clause 21, page 24, line 29, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
68. Clause 21, page 25, line 1, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
69. Clause 21, page 25, line 3, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
70. Clause 23, line 23, after “**Multicultural**” insert “**and Multifaith**”.
71. Clause 23, line 24, after “**Multicultural**” insert “**and Multifaith**”.
72. Clause 23, line 26, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.

73. Clause 23, line 30, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
74. Clause 23, page 26, line 23, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
75. Clause 23, page 26, line 26, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
76. Clause 23, page 26, line 29, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
77. Clause 23, page 26, line 31, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
78. Clause 23, page 28, line 5, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
79. Clause 23, page 29, line 6, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
80. Clause 23, page 30, line 27, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
81. Clause 23, page 31, line 7, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
82. Clause 23, page 32, line 5, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
83. Clause 27, line 23, after “**Multicultural**” insert “**and Multifaith**”.
84. Clause 28, line 7, after “**Multicultural**” insert “**and Multifaith**”.
85. Clause 31, line 14, after “**Amendment**” insert “**(Multicultural and Multifaith Victoria)**”.
86. Clause 31, line 18, after “**Amendment**” insert “**(Multicultural and Multifaith Victoria)**”.
87. Clause 31, page 39, line 5, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
88. Clause 31, page 39, line 11, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
89. Clause 31, page 39, line 26, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
90. Clause 32, line 7, after “Multicultural” insert “and Multifaith”.
91. Long title, omit “Victoria,” and insert “and Multifaith Victoria,”.
92. Short title, after “**Amendment**” insert “**(Multicultural and Multifaith Victoria)**”.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (13:30): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

I rise to speak briefly to the amendments on the Multicultural Victoria Amendment Bill 2026. Can I start by thanking the opposition, the Greens and the crossbench for working constructively with the government to pass this important bill. This bill will lay the foundation for a renewed approach to working with Victoria’s multicultural and multifaith communities. It will improve the way we listen to and engage with multicultural and multifaith communities, and it will strengthen Victoria’s multicultural settings, institutions and frameworks.

Victorians come from over 300 different ancestries, speak more than 290 languages and practise almost 200 faiths. Victoria is a proudly multicultural state. Almost half of us were born overseas or have a parent born overseas. All of us who are not First Peoples come from a lineage of migration, and that migration continues to shape Victoria today. Many of the members in this very chamber, regardless of which side they stand on, can trace their own family history back to a migration story, and I am one of them. When Victorians work together, we are better able to stand up for respect, unity and belonging. This government is very proud to uphold Victoria’s reputation as a safe, diverse and inclusive state where all people feel safe to be and express who they are.

In 2024 the government commissioned Victoria’s multicultural review, which recommended ways for the government to strengthen its support for multicultural and multifaith communities. I want to put on record my thanks to George Lekakis AO, who led the review, as well as the expert advisory group who supported it: Hass Dellal AO, Carmel Guerra OAM, Miriam Suss OAM and Mark Duckworth PSM. This bill is about implementing the changes that communities told us that they need to feel heard and supported. Every Victorian, regardless of the language they speak, has the right to be treated fairly, and they have the right to make informed decisions based on meaningful engagement with government services. This bill delivers on that commitment by embedding translation and interpreting services as an essential service for government.

During consultation on the bill we heard from the community that they were concerned about multifaith representation in the new organisation. The government has listened, which is why we moved an amendment to include 'multifaith' in the name of the organisation and in the name of this bill. This is a small change in wording, but it reflects who this organisation is actually there to serve, and that is multicultural and multifaith Victorians right across our great state.

With the house's indulgence, I would like to take a moment to express my deepest, deepest sympathy to everyone affected by the recent flood disaster in Nepal. I was honoured to stand alongside the Premier in Federation Square just over a week ago to mourn those lost and stand in solidarity with the growing Nepali community here in Victoria. The loss is truly heartbreaking, and our thoughts are with the community as they grieve for their lost loved ones and as the search continues for those not yet found.

Before I finish I would like to acknowledge the former Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ingrid Stitt in the other place for her years of dedication to and support for multicultural communities in Victoria and for working tirelessly to progress important reforms in this space. Finally, I want to thank the Victorian Multicultural Commission and everyone who has served on it. In particular, I want to acknowledge Louise Perry, the interim chairperson, and Vivienne Nguyen AM, who is the former chairperson. Both have made such an enormous contribution to multicultural communities across Victoria, and their leadership has helped build the foundation that Multicultural and Multifaith Victoria now rests on.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (13:34): The coalition parties do not oppose the amendments or the bill. We have made a number of contributions on this bill, both in this chamber and in the other place through our shadow minister Evan Mulholland, noting a number of amendments which were passed through the Legislative Council, particularly in relation to the name of the bill, adding the words 'and Multifaith', which have been removed, and other issues, particularly in relation to operations such as staff appointments and the like.

As I said when this bill was in the chamber some weeks ago, the mere fact that what we are now seeing is a complete review or changing of the multicultural commission does leave me with some sadness, in a way, because what had been established since the early 1980s was I think Australia's best multicultural commission, the Victorian Multicultural Commission. It was the best example and the best model that served many governments and served us all very well in a non-political and nonpartisan way and had managed what is a very important fabric of our society – that is, multicultural affairs – in a very successful way. The politicisation of that organisation over a number of years has seen it effectively restarted, which is now what this bill does, even enshrining independence into its operation, which has never had to be the case before. It was always considered that it would be that as a matter of course. That we have to tell people not to be politically partisan in such an important area of community participation and social cohesion is, to me, somewhat surprising, but we do not oppose the bill, as we have said.

With multicultural affairs, as a former minister I know it is so important that as governments we get policy in this area right and it is not used for political ends. I made a number of references, which I will not refer to again, in relation to previous events that had occurred. It is something that unites us as Victorians. We do not have Brisbane's weather, we do not have Sydney's harbour, but what we have is an appreciation for multicultural affairs and multiculturalism, which is something that binds us together as a strong international city and state – very far geographically from most parts of the world, but one where we know we are better together than apart. That is why I think it is so important that we focus on this area of government. I do not think many people realise how important good policy in this space is. I will not go further. I will just say that we do not oppose the amendments, obviously, and we do not oppose the bill.

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: A message will now be sent to the Legislative Council informing them of the house's decision.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ben Carroll:

That this bill be now read a second time.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:38): I rise to speak on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026. This bill, sadly from Labor's perspective, has been a shameful con. It is a shameful con on Victorians, because though the new Premier stood up on his first day in the job to say that integrity would not be optional, this bill proves integrity is entirely optional under his watch and under this Labor government. He is a continuation of Daniel Andrews's and Jacinta Allan's governments; that is what he is. Though we have been calling for IBAC to be given new powers, IBAC has been calling for powers, integrity experts have been calling for increased powers and frankly Victorians have been calling to see the corruption in this state cleaned up, we know this bill will not do that, because what this bill does is cover up what has occurred under Labor's watch. That would not surprise any Victorian, because we have always said as a coalition that this Labor government cannot be trusted to ever get to the bottom of what has been the worst corruption scandal not only in Victoria's history but arguably in Australia's history – \$15 billion of corruption.

You do not ask a criminal to clean up the crime scene. What this IBAC bill does is enable what are called follow-the-money powers so that IBAC has the capacity to go to third parties, which has been a significant issue for IBAC in terms of operating investigations into matters, particularly in relation to the Big Build, where third-party contractors were at fault and alleged to have committed many of the corrupt acts. The bill also changes the relevant offence threshold within the current act to extend the capacity for investigation beyond simply an offence to also cover a serious disciplinary matter.

But here is the kicker. Here is the bit that really matters in terms of what has occurred over the last 12 years. The government has blocked retrospectivity where those matters have been investigated previously by IBAC, where IBAC has looked at them and on-referred those matters or where they have been dismissed. All of those matters are outside the scope of this bill. I do not think any Victorian would accept what the government is proposing, and I also suspect that neither will the Parliament. I suspect that the government is about to get a lesson in parliamentary democracy, because this bill is a cover-up bill. That is what it is. This bill says, 'We are going to give IBAC powers, but we're not going to allow them to look into the rorts that occurred under our watch.'

Though I will go into some detail of the particular examples of what cannot be investigated, I will start with the one that all Victorians know. The former Premier, Premier Allan, wrote to IBAC seeking to refer Big Build allegations of corruption to IBAC for investigation. It is our view that the then Premier only did that because she knew that IBAC did not have the powers. It is our view that it was all one great big hoax. But nevertheless, the former Premier wrote to IBAC seeking an investigation, and lo and behold, she received a response back from IBAC to say that they did not have the power to investigate – because they did not. They did not have the power. The Premier did not admit to receiving that letter, by the way. She hid that one in the bottom drawer. But IBAC wrote back and said they did not have the power so they referred the matters to police. Therefore, as I said earlier, all of those matters are now not in the purview of IBAC for investigation. Everything that the then Premier referred to IBAC for investigation, if this bill receives passage in its current form, will not be able to be investigated by IBAC. I think that says everything about what is a clear proof point of the ongoing cover-up by this government.

I would take the house to clause 8, which brings in a new section 200(3), and I will read it in:

Nothing in subsection (1) or (2) permits the IBAC to reopen –

let us get that clear: nothing permits IBAC to reopen; it could not be clearer, ‘nothing’ –

- (a) a complaint or notification to the IBAC that it had dismissed or referred to another body before the commencement day; or
- (b) an investigation, whether of a complaint or notification or an own motion investigation, that it had completed before the commencement day.

As I said earlier, what that section makes very clear is that where an investigation has occurred and where a dismissal of a matter has occurred because IBAC may not have had the power – IBAC may have dismissed an allegation because it did not have the power to investigate – or where there was an on-referral, all of those matters IBAC cannot explicitly investigate.

Why would you possibly want to cover up entirely everything that has been referred within that remit? I have heard the government say, ‘We have a royal commission.’ Well, I would say to the government: what about every other single referral that went to IBAC over the last 12 years on any matter, on any instance of alleged corruption that has occurred in this state in the last 12 years? Under this bill IBAC cannot look at those matters where those circumstances exist on any issue. I will give a very good example, because the government is perpetuating the con. I referred the government’s budget lotto deal to IBAC. It will not be investigable when this bill passes, and it has not got the purview of the royal commission. That is specifically excluded from this legislation, which is why under standing orders I wish to advise the house of amendments to this bill and request that they be circulated.

We do not oppose and will support the underlying enhancement of powers to IBAC. Of course we will. When asked about this I always make the point first: everything the government does we have tried to do first. So of course we support additional powers, but we will also make sure through our amendments, hopefully supported by the remaining members of the Parliament, that we pass a bill that Victorians deserve to see passed and see IBAC powers given in a way that not only Victorians expect but give the agency the powers they need to chase down the \$15 billion of corrupted money and get the crooks, because that is what Victorians want to see. They want the crooks caught and they want the money found, and we know that this bill will not do that.

Let me speak to the proposed amendments. Firstly, our amendments will see the bill fully retrospective. That aligns with a private members bill we moved in March that was supported by the Council. The Council passed that law and the bill, which would have enabled follow-the-money powers and which was passed by the will of the Council. It was brought back into the chamber, and the former Leader of the House moved that the bill could not even enter into this chamber. She blocked it from entry into this chamber and the Labor members of Parliament opposed it. Our first amendment will make the bill fully retrospective. That is what Victorians deserve, because they do not expect and they would not, in my view, support IBAC powers that block investigation into issues that have already been raised with the integrity agency. Why would they? Why would they support that cover-up?

Our second amendment inserts a timely reporting requirement for reports. What we saw with the Operation Richmond report was a disgrace. Years – seven years, from memory – of backwards and forwards trying to cover up a report being tabled. Shameful. Our amendment will ensure there is an insertion into the legislation which makes clear our expectation that reports are tabled as timely as possible. It will then ensure that, though the court will still have full jurisdiction in relation to any matter that is put to the court, and so they should, they will have a clear legislative understanding of our expectation as a Parliament that when it comes to IBAC’s investigations, the Parliament expects those reports to be tabled. So when a matter is before a court, though they will give it the consideration that it deserves, whatever that application may be, by a person or party associated with a report at that time, there will be a clear legislative underpinning whereby the court can rely on an understanding that the Parliament expects that report will be tabled as timely as is possible, and I think all Victorians would expect that. When you are talking about a report by your chief anti-corruption agency, Victorians do not want to see a merry-go-round of years of court action or procedural games to stop that report being tabled. Though people involved should have the capacity to appeal to a court where

a matter has arisen, it should not be endless, and it should not be a reward where the purpose of that action is to frustrate the tabling.

Our third amendment would repeal the examinations to generally be held in private provision. Only this government could possibly want to shut out public examinations, and we know why. We have seen how many Labor members of Parliament have been involved in integrity investigations. It therefore is of no surprise that the government tried to close the door on investigations and keep them held in private. What this amendment will do is repeal that provision, and that again follows the private members bill that was moved in March.

There is a fourth amendment, which is a new concept and one that I have already flagged with all other non-government members in this Parliament both in this place and the other place. Currently a minister has a public interest immunity privilege protection when it comes to certain documents they may hold. In shorthand, a minister can say, when IBAC comes knocking, 'I'm not going to give you the document because it's a cabinet document' – or a former minister, or as might be the case, a former Premier, and I can think of one or two. When someone knocks on the door and says, 'I want some information' – knock, knock, knock – the former Premier can, under the current legislation, say, 'I have public interest immunity from providing that information,' and it is a full stop, blanket immunity. Well, no more, if this amendment is passed.

I say to my colleagues on the crossbench in the other place specifically but also in this place: that is a new proposal, one that we have not moved by private members bill before but I think is very meritorious. I also note that a removal of that immunity when it comes to IBAC should extend to the royal commission, because that immunity exists when the royal commission comes knocking to the ministers and the former premiers – they have the immunity there too. So I give notice that we intend to move a similar amendment in relation to the royal commission through the Inquiries Act 2014, because we are going to remove that power. We are making it clear, and we are seeking the Parliament's support. We are going to make it clear so what the ministers know and what the former premiers know can no longer be covered up under some fake guise of public interest immunity. I think we all want to know what they know. We all want to know, and we are looking forward to a proper royal commission that ensures they get asked, because, as the coalition has said, if we are in government, former Premier Daniel Andrews and former Premier Jacinta Allan will be before the royal commission. They will be –

Nathan Lambert: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I ask the member on his feet to refer to current members of this place by their correct titles.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind the member for Brighton.

James NEWBURY: Further to the amendments circulated, I want to put on record the number of times the coalition has raised issues with IBAC, which now this bill would seek to block, and it is important to make this point because much of the public allegation in this Big Build corruption scandal – the biggest scandal we have seen in Victoria's history – has been referred to our chief anti-corruption agency. For some time, in substance, the behaviour of the CFMEU has been reported – particular allegations on sites such as widespread ghost shifting, double payments, false signings, corrupt practices involving labour hire companies and failure to intervene in public scandals. All of these issues have been referred to IBAC. Can IBAC investigate them if this bill is passed in its current form? No. What a shameful con. The government's response is, 'Well, we have a royal commission.' As I said earlier, what about every other corruption matter that has been referred to IBAC over the last 12 years? All of it –

Michael O'Brien interjected.

James NEWBURY: I think you could probably, member for Malvern, refer the last 12 years to IBAC as a bulk job lot. But it is true to say that every other matter – and the lotto corp deal which was referred to IBAC – is not within the jurisdiction of the royal commission was referred to IBAC. What

about the secret tax? What about the new secret tax that Victorians found out about? Is that within the remit of the royal commission? No. Do Victorians deserve to know who knew what when? Yes. That is why we will move amendments to ensure that happens.

Our amendments will make sure that IBAC finally has the powers that they need, the powers that they deserve and the powers that our integrity experts, agencies and Victorians have been calling for. Instead we have a bill which reverts entirely to Labor type, which is to cover up, cover up corruption, cover up a \$15 billion corruption. Even today when the Premier was asked about what is in the bill in black and white, the Premier did not tell the truth. He did not tell the truth. He claimed that IBAC could investigate when his bill says otherwise. How shameful. That is why this is a shameful con. Though we support any bill that brings about new powers to IBAC – any bill – because we want them there, we are going to amend this one, and we are seeking support from the rest of the Parliament, because Victorians deserve to get to the bottom of corruption in this state, and with these amendments in place they can.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Suburban Rail Loop

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Treasurer. Treasury warned the government in 2020 that interest on borrowings for the Suburban Rail Loop could cost around \$25 billion based on a 30-year bond rate of just 2.6 per cent. With the 30-year bond rate now at 5.7 per cent, what is the government's revised estimate of the total interest cost of the Suburban Rail Loop?

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:02): We are proud to be getting on with building this important piece of infrastructure. We know those opposite do not support the project. The opposition –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Youth is warned.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, sledging is not relevant. If the Treasurer does not understand, he should just say that. If you do not understand, just say it.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Youth, this is your second warning. I remind members of the correct way to raise a point of order. The Treasurer to come back to the question.

Colin BROOKS: The financing arrangements for the SRL are transparent: a one-third contribution from the state government, one-third from value capture and one-third from the federal government. I am proud to be part of the Carroll Labor government, which has found already \$2 billion worth of savings on this project and brought the overall cost of the project down to \$33.3 billion.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): If the government does not have a revised estimate, how can the Treasurer credibly claim that the Suburban Rail Loop is affordable when the borrowing rate underpinning Treasury's original \$25 billion interest estimate has more than doubled?

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:04): The answer goes to the fact that we have already brought the cost of this project down to \$33.3 billion, and as the Premier has outlined, further work – the technical review of the two stations packages – is where we are expecting to find a further billion dollars worth of savings and then find further savings –

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, on the question of relevance, both the substantive and the supplementary relate specifically to the financing costs of this project, which the Treasurer has not gone anywhere near.

The SPEAKER: I cannot tell the Treasurer how to answer the question. He was being relevant to the question.

Colin BROOKS: Just to conclude the answer, for the benefit of the opposition, the answer is that we are still looking for further savings in this project and we are bringing the price of the project down.

Ministers statements: construction industry

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:05): Every dollar we spend, as the Treasurer just highlighted, will have a dividend for every person in every part of our state of Victoria. We know every Victorian works hard, and they have a right to expect honest government, proper scrutiny and consequences for wrongdoing. Integrity, on our side of the chamber, is non-negotiable. It is why the very first thing I did as Premier was call a royal commission –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Euroa! When I am on my feet, there will be silence. Members will cease interjecting. The Premier, without assistance.

Ben CARROLL: The very first thing I did as Premier was call a royal commission into the construction sector. I also said we would get on and strengthen IBAC's powers to follow the money and expand the definition of 'corruption', something the opposition leader has been on the public record as opposing.

James Newbury: Speaker, this is a very serious point of order.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will be removed from the chamber without warning.

James Newbury: The Premier is pre-empting debate.

The SPEAKER: I do remind the Premier about the bills that are currently before the chamber and to not pre-empt debate on those matters.

Ben CARROLL: Those opposite want to lecture on integrity, and it is very clear only one side of this Parliament wants to get on and do the royal commission and strengthen IBAC. You cannot demand answers while opposing stronger powers to find them. We are getting on with the job. That is what Victorians expect, and that is what we are delivering. Healthy democracies rely on the principle of stewardship. We are all temporary custodians of public institutions and finances. We respect and have proprietary of public office, and we ask those opposite to take an example as well.

Taxation

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): My question is to the Premier. The Premier says his department has found no other secret taxes or levies like the \$8 billion secret tax on public transport fares. Given the Premier knew about this secret \$8 billion tax but kept it hidden from Victorians for years, why should anyone believe him when he says there are no others?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:08): I will tell you one thing I found: \$40 billion in cuts that will go to the heart of hardworking Victorians. That is what they promised. Warren Pickering and Jess Wilson –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House is warned.

James Newbury: Speaker, I did have a point of order on relevance, but also the way he just spoke to the Leader of the Opposition was completely inappropriate.

The SPEAKER: There is no reason to be disrespectful in the chamber – absolutely none. The Premier has concluded his answer.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:08): Given the Premier’s lack of credibility on these matters, will he release his department’s advice so Victorians can see for themselves whether any other taxes, levies or charges have been kept secret?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:09): Victorians cannot afford a Liberal–One Nation coalition. Forty billion dollars is one in seven public servants.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, it is not relevant to attack the opposition.

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

Ben CARROLL: I am not attacking; I am telling the facts. We are investing in schools and health, and they will cut it.

Ministers statements: roads

Paul HAMER (Box Hill – Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (14:09): Safe and reliable roads are one of the most basic things that a government can deliver, and that is why the Carroll Labor government is focused on getting back to basics by investing an additional \$352 million this year to double the number of potholes removed and double the length of road repaired. That is double the number of potholes that those opposite claim they would fix in a given year, and our investment is flowing immediately, not four years from now.

Labor listens to communities, building and upgrading roads to help Victorians get home sooner. Last week I joined the Premier and the federal minister for transport in the member for Werribee’s electorate to open the new Ison Road, three months ahead of schedule. Over the weekend we announced a \$1.55 billion upgrade to the Western Freeway in partnership with the Albanese Labor government. This upgrade will improve safety and reduce congestion for the tens of thousands of people who use the Western Freeway every single day. The Minister for Youth, the member for Melton and the Minister for Rural and Regional Development have long been advocates for this upgrade. It is a game changer for the west.

A re-elected Carroll Labor government will upgrade more major roads that Victorians use every day. In the south-east we will duplicate Hallam Road in Hampton Park and Hallam, we will widen Evans Road in Cranbourne West and we will upgrade the intersection of Governor Road and Boundary Road in Mordialloc. In the north we will upgrade Findon Road in Epping and Somerton Road in Greenvale. And in the west we will widen Point Cook Road in Seabrook, we will fix the Ballan Road–Bolton Road intersection in Wyndham Vale, we will widen Taylors Road in Kings Park and we will upgrade the intersection of Hogans Road and Derrimut Road in Hoppers Crossing.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:11): My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier guarantee that the corruption commission, IBAC, will not be blocked in any way from investigating past allegations of corruption merely because IBAC was unable to investigate them at the time?

The SPEAKER: I remind the Premier about pre-empting debate.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:12): I want to be very clear so the Shadow Attorney-General can be very clear and knows exactly what we are doing here. If IBAC are yet to assess a complaint – you following? If IBAC are yet to assess a complaint –

Members interjecting.

Ben CARROLL: I am trying to give you the answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no reason for members not to direct their contributions through the Chair.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, to assist the Premier, this question related to past allegations.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Ben CARROLL: Past allegations or self-referrals – if IBAC are yet to assess a complaint they already have, it is open to IBAC to use those new powers to assess it.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:13): The member for Bendigo East's 2024 referral of serious CFMEU allegations was dismissed because IBAC lacked jurisdiction. If integrity is no longer optional, why should those allegations remain permanently blocked from IBAC's scrutiny?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:13): Let us be very clear. We are expanding IBAC's jurisdiction, we have also called a royal commission and we are establishing a special prosecutor to work alongside the royal commission.

Ministers statements: manufacturing industry

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Jobs, Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Defence Industry) (14:13): The word of the day is 'Jesstruction', where you go out of your way to destroy jobs. On this side of the house –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, it is completely inappropriate to refer to a member by their Christian name and try some stupid juvenile game of adding it to another word. This is completely inappropriate.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Minister for Jobs, be mindful of how you are expressing yourself.

Melissa HORNE: On this side of the house, we back working people, we create jobs and we support manufacturing. In fact just last week I took a trip down to the south-east to visit some of the fantastic manufacturers that the Carroll Labor government is supporting. In the member for Bayswater's electorate, we are helping EVO Power to scale up their factory, where they build industrial-sized batteries that help businesses and communities take advantage of cheap solar power. In the member for Oakleigh's electorate, we are backing Victorian manufacturer Axent to build smart traffic signals to be used across the country, and, let me tell you, there is a bit of a rush on for orange 'Danger' signs that warn of a Liberal–One Nation coalition. In the Deputy Premier's electorate our support is intermodal, backing in boatbuilder Bar Crusher Boats to add a new production line and bus maker Volgren to expand their facilities.

When it comes to getting things built in Victoria, the Carroll Labor government is on the right track. We are supporting manufacturers to scale up and innovate. We are backing them in with our local content requirements through the \$150 million Victorian Investment Fund. On the other side, however, they have an opposition leader who does not believe that governments can create jobs, so when –

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will be mindful. I do not mind comparisons and contrasts, but it is not appropriate to attack the opposition.

Melissa HORNE: Of course, Speaker. Thank you for your ruling. When the opposition announced their plan to buy new trains, Victorian workers, particularly those in Ballarat, were quite right to ask where they would be built. The opposition leader's plan is one carriage short of a train set, and her promised cuts will derail Victoria's manufacturing advantage. While those opposite are all marrow

and no bone, on this side of the house the Carroll Labor government will continue to back in manufacturers.

Climate change

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:16): My question is to the Premier. Premier, more than 1300 people have been confirmed dead from flash flooding in Nepal caused by a collapsing glacier due to unprecedented global warming. Wildfires have been raging across Indonesia for weeks. Now scientists say that there is no way to limit global heating to 1.5 degrees. Yet, despite all of this, we have seen the Labor government, under previous Premier Jacinta Allan, approve five fossil fuel projects in the last year, including gas drilling near the Twelve Apostles, and pledge to fast-track more gas projects. Premier, we are about to head into a super El Niño here in Victoria. Will you continue down the path of approving new fossil fuels, or will you commit to banning approving any new fossil fuel projects in Victoria?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:17): Can I first acknowledge, as the member did, that my thoughts are with everyone in Nepal. I think all members from all parts of the chamber were at Federation Square recently, and I want to acknowledge the member for Broadmeadows as chair of the parliamentary friendship group with Mr Mulholland in the other place. I think what Nepal did show is that climate change is real, that the melting of the glaciers and whatever happens in Nepal affects the rest of the world. We all do know that Nepal, when it comes to climate change, has minimal effect on the world, but they are having devastating effects there now. I do believe in climate change, and I do believe in climate action. Whether it is tackling transport emissions, like our government is doing with the work of Minister D'Ambrosio, or whether it is the offshore wind auction that we have just commenced as well, we are on the side of action on this side of the chamber, not just words.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:18): I appreciate this government's commitment to renewable energy and bringing down transport emissions, but, Premier, the science is very clear that fossil fuels cause climate change and the world cannot afford one more new fossil fuel project if we want to avert the worst impacts of climate change. Climate change is already having a devastating impact on our communities here in Victoria – fires, floods, extreme weather, a super El Niño. Parts of Victoria are already becoming uninsurable and in fact uninhabitable, so will you commit to a ban on any new fossil fuel projects in Victoria?

The SPEAKER: Member for Melbourne, I ask you to direct your questions through the Chair. It is to the Premier, not to me.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:19): Our government has made record investments in renewable energy. We know the natural assets we have – solar, wind. These are important resources. We know the green transition is an important opportunity for jobs, and having free TAFE and making sure everyone can participate in this transition is what our government will always do.

Ministers statements: regional development

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka – Minister for Rural and Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Water) (14:19): I rise to update the house on the record investment of the Carroll Labor government in rural and regional Victoria. This government has invested more than \$50 billion in rural and regional Victoria. That is schools and kinders built, hospitals upgraded, TAFEs expanded and more trains, and those trains are built in Ballarat. We also know that our roads are essential to the safety, connectivity and productivity of our rural and regional communities. For families travelling to school, for freight operators moving goods and for our mighty agricultural sector, we rely on roads, and that is why our government is delivering the largest investment in road maintenance that this state has ever seen. We are investing \$352 million, on top of the \$1.4 billion we have already committed to, to rebuild, repair and resurface roads right across Victoria. This investment will double the number of potholes fixed this financial year from 250,000 to 500,000, and 70 per cent of this record investment will go into regional roads. Seventy per cent is nearly three times the 25 per

cent that those opposite are promising our regional communities. While those opposite are talking about empty guarantees, we are getting on with it and delivering real outcomes. Some of those opposite are out in the regions talking about percentage guarantees while their leader is in Melbourne adding to her \$40 billion black hole –

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume her seat. The minister does not have an opportunity to continue.

Road maintenance

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:22): My question is to the Premier. The Premier has pledged that Labor wants to bring road maintenance back in house to government. Why did the Premier promise this just a week after he finalised the privatisation of the last remaining in-house government road builder SprayLine Road Services?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:22): We have doubled the road maintenance budget since they were in office. While they have promised 250,000 potholes, we will get rid of half a million potholes, and we will bring it in house. I ask you to match the commitment.

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, Premier.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:23): If Labor privatises road building one week and says it wants government to do the work the next, why should Victorians believe a single promise this government makes?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:23): This is a comprehensive plan that includes bringing road maintenance back in house, making sure there is no buck-passing. My question is: will those opposite match our promise?

Ministers statements: public transport

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:23): The Carroll Labor government is continuing to build the transport system Victorians need. We are busy removing level crossings, building new stations, upgrading roads and investing in better public transport. Last week the new Melton station opened to passengers. It is beautiful. It is bigger, safer and more accessible, with four new platforms. It includes two longer platforms ready for nine-car VLocity trains from next year, increasing passenger capacity during the peaks on the Melton line by 50 per cent. We have also removed Melton's final two boom gates, bringing the total number of level crossings removed across Melbourne to 94. I thank the member for Melton for his advocacy. Melton station has been built to support future electrification. The state and federal Labor governments are investing nearly \$153 million to progress the next stage of electrification works because we are getting on with electrification. We are not off on some bizarre side quest with expensive foreign-made trains that cannot go through the Metro Tunnel or find a way to the city loop. And yesterday tunnelling started on the Suburban Rail Loop between Burwood and Glen Waverley. This orbital rail line will cut travel times, reduce congestion and connect Victorians to Monash and Deakin by rail for the first time. While Labor always backs Victorian workers and local manufacturing, there are those who want to send train-building jobs overseas, with no benefit to commuters. Labor builds roads, we build stations, we build train tracks, we build trams, we build trains, we remove level crossings, we add train capacity and we invest in the future of our network. Jess Wilson and the Liberal–One Nation coalition have already promised to cut train services to Melton in their \$40 billion cuts.

Constituency questions

Lowan electorate

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:27): (1798) My constituency question is to the Minister for Mental Health. In March 2022 Labor announced mental health and wellbeing locals for Ballarat, Horsham and Ararat following a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health

System. Mental health and wellbeing locals are the front-facing mental health services that Victorians need to get mental health support in their local communities. Labor said these locals were set to open from mid-2023 and by the end of 2026, but more than three years after that deadline our communities are still waiting. All the while, Labor continues to collect hundreds of millions of dollars through the mental health and wellbeing levy to fund these reforms – in fact more than \$1.2 billion this year alone. Minister, the information I seek is: why hasn't the Labor government delivered the promised mental health and wellbeing locals for Ballarat, Horsham and Ararat when they were announced four years ago and were supposed to open from mid-2023 and the levy money is there to deliver them?

Thomastown electorate

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (14:28): (1799) My constituency question is for the Minister for Energy and Resources. Minister, how many residents of the Thomastown electorate have applied to the utility relief grant scheme in the past 12 months? The utility relief grant scheme is another way the Carroll Labor government is helping Victorians with cost-of-living pressures, particularly our pensioners on the age pension. The program provides residents that are eligible to apply with a reduction of up to \$650 off each utility-type bill – that is, gas, electricity and water – every two years. News is travelling fast in the electorate by word of mouth, and staff in my office are working very hard to help.

Caulfield electorate

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:28): (1800) My question is to the Minister for Housing, Building and Precincts. What steps is the minister taking to address the concerns of the McMillan Street locals that a public housing tenant has become so aggressive and antisocial? Residents of McMillan Street, Elsternwick, are putting up with antisocial behaviour from an unruly Department of Families, Fairness and Housing tenant. The owners corporation wrote to Cheltenham housing on 17 July to no avail. Serious safety incidents reported include aggressive and erratic behaviour, people allegedly forcing entry via balconies, suspected break-ins and rubbish containing large kitchen knives and used syringes found near the bin area. Impact on children and families – residents report children being frightened and woken by violent yelling and banging. Residents have tried to make reports and have been ignored by the department. They have been ignored by certainly Cheltenham housing. Something must be done to protect these residents.

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (14:29): (1801) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education. How will local high schools across Merri-bek continue to benefit from our Labor government's ongoing investments to improve and support local schools, including Brunswick Secondary College? Brunswick Secondary College was originally opened in the early 1990s following the amalgamation of Brunswick Technical School, Brunswick Girls School, Brunswick East Secondary School and Brunswick High School, placing the school origins on the Dawson Street site well over 100 years ago. Over this time the school has proudly continued to provide local young people with a high-quality education and an increasingly vibrant and inclusive learning environment to prepare them for their life ahead. Now home to 1100 students and growing from over 50 cultural backgrounds and nationalities, Brunswick Secondary continues to empower students to aim for excellence both academically and socially while supporting them to aspire to succeed socially, academically, environmentally and artistically. However, given the area's growth, ongoing investment will be needed to support the school. That is why I was pleased to visit on 1 September with Sheena Watt, a member in the other place, and meet Shane Gemmola, the acting principal, for a tour and update on the school's work and priorities, which I look forward to Labor candidate for Brunswick Gabe Steger working with.

Brighton electorate

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:30): (1802) My question is to the Premier, and I ask: when will the state government restore the \$240,000 in funding cut by Labor from the Haemophilia Foundation Victoria? Labor's cut has forced the foundation to shut its doors. For background, haemophilia is an inherited genetic disorder that stops blood from clotting. An estimated 1647 Victorians live with bleeding disorders. The haemophilia foundation has helped to ensure people living with haemophilia receive essential education, advocacy, peer support and connections to specialised care. Brighton resident Naomi Denton has experienced firsthand how vital the foundation's services are. Her young son was diagnosed with severe haemophilia immediately after birth. Since then the family has leaned on the foundation and the broader haemophilia community for information, support and connection with other families. For families like the Denton family, haemophilia requires constant vigilance and careful management, particularly with children. As Naomi said to me, the cut means she and her family will lose essential elements of the support system they depend on.

Cranbourne electorate

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (14:31): (1803) My constituency question is to the Minister for Health Ms Stitt in the other place. Why is continued investment in our health system so important for growing communities like Cranbourne, particularly in the face of Liberal–National–One Nation coalition plans for \$40 billion in cuts? The word is out: our beautiful three-storey Cranbourne Community Hospital is at risk. This amazing local service is the pride of Cranbourne with ophthalmology, dental, dialysis and so much more, including free parking. There is a lot to be proud of, especially with the urgent care clinic coming soon, but I am very worried. The Liberal Party have said publicly and on the record that this is not a real hospital, but I am here to tell you that there are real clinicians working there: real nurses, real physiotherapists, real doctors, real surgeons and real patient support staff. This is all at risk if the Liberal Party, in coalition with One Nation, have their way. I feel sick to the stomach at the impact of this, and I look forward to the minister's response.

Sandringham electorate

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:32): (1804) My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning. Does the minister intend to work constructively with the City of Kingston following the city's unanimous resolution of 24 August regarding 79 Balcombe Road, Mentone, that seeks to ensure that the land at that site becomes public open space land? For many years Mentone residents have fought to protect the heritage-listed station precinct so that the area's unique history and character can be enjoyed by future generations. Despite this work from the community, the Labor government to date want to sell off the land on Balcombe Road rather than making it available for community use. Kingston council, to their credit, have resolved to make an in-principle offer to purchase the land or for a long-term lease so that this space can be incorporated into the station precinct and opened to the public. This is a practical solution to a problem which has frustrated the Mentone community for far too long, and I urge the minister to get it done.

Preston electorate

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (14:33): (1805) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education, and my question is: when will the Department of Education establish the Pavilion School reference group? You might remember that the member for Thomastown and I raised a number of issues relating to the Pavilion School in March, and we were told that the reference group would address and solve these issues. It is now September and the reference group still has not been formed. We need the reference group to be formed as a matter of urgency. We need it also to include a genuine cross-section of perspectives from within the school community, including union representatives. We also need it to contain a genuine cross-section of perspectives from within the department itself, including those with central experience and understanding of our flexible learning environment policies. Finally, given how long it has taken, I think we need to consider extending the emergency Victorian School Building Authority rental support that has been provided to the school's Epping

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campus. I do not think it is fair that the school will start the new school year next year without knowing where things might stand at the end of that school year. I thank the minister and the department for their consideration.

Polwarth electorate

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:34): (1806) My question this afternoon is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the question I have is: in the alleged extra funding for roads between now and Christmas, can the people of Polwarth expect to see resurfacing on the Princes Highway between Colac and Winchelsea? This stretch of road is a disgrace. It is so riddled with potholes, broken surfaces, a lack of line marking and just a general lack of maintenance that it has become a real road risk for users. Broken rims, cars with popped tyres – the whole works can be experienced on that road any time of day or night, and with the ongoing wet winter it has been nothing but a disaster for so many local people. But that joins a long list of roads in Polwarth. Hendy Main Road coming out of Torquay back towards the Surf Coast into the shire to Winchelsea is a disgrace at 80 kilometres an hour, as are the Cobden-Stoneyford Road and the Hamilton Highway.

Lara electorate

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (14:35): (1807) My question is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. How is the Victorian government supporting new and emerging multicultural communities so that they can build connections in our community and create spaces that are safe, welcoming and respectful of cultural traditions? Geelong's north has historically attracted many multicultural Victorians. In the 1960s and 70s these were largely European migrants, but today this has changed, and we are seeing many new and emerging communities arriving from different parts of the world, in particular many communities from countries within Asia and the Middle East. One of these communities is the Hazara community, who I met with last week. I had a tour of their brand new community centre, which the Hazara community have worked incredibly hard to secure through a massive fundraising effort. It is so important that we continue to support our multicultural communities so they can have hubs in the community just like this. On this side of the house we have a long history of helping to ensure that all Victorians can participate safely in community life, free from racism, vilification and discrimination, and I am proud to be a member of a government that backs our multicultural communities.

Martin Cameron: On a point of order, Speaker, I have some unanswered questions: 1259, 3309, 1711, 3523 and 3675. I will hand them to the Clerk.

Bridget Vallence: Speaker, I have a point of order on a number of questions that are outstanding and overdue, one being to the Treasurer that is now 15 months overdue on incorrect land tax assessments. These questions to the Treasurer are overdue and unanswered: questions on notice 2421, 3237, 3239, 3240, 3242, 3256 and 3649. The questions to the Minister for Finance that are overdue are questions on notice 3420, 3422, 3423, 3427, 3430, 3431, 3435, 3436, 3439, 3502, 3503, 3504 and 3505. The question that is overdue and unanswered by the Minister for Skills and Training is question on notice 3453. The questions that are overdue and unanswered by the Minister for Jobs are questions on notice 3486, 3488 and 3510. The questions that are overdue and unanswered by the Minister for Education are question on notice 3210 and constituency question 1718. A question to the Premier that is overdue and unanswered is question on notice 3316. And with one sitting week of the Parliament left, I would really appreciate responses for my constituents –

The SPEAKER: Order! The member knows not to add to her point of order. Pass your list to the clerks.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I seek to raise with you a constituency question to the Premier which remains unanswered from January, 1450; to the Premier from April, 1562 –

The SPEAKER: Member for Brighton, we just need the numbers, please.

James Newbury: I am giving context.

The SPEAKER: A point of order is not for context; it is to give us the numbers of the unanswered questions.

James Newbury: Questions 1628 to the Premier, 1652 from July to the Premier, 1678 from July to the Premier and 1708 from August to the Premier all remain unanswered.

On a further point of order, Speaker, I would appreciate your advice or information to the house for the last time considering the number of outstanding questions and ask that you advise ministers in this chamber that the matters remain outstanding.

The SPEAKER: Member for Brighton, thank you for your point of order. I will ask the clerks to review them and get back to me.

Rulings from the Chair

Constituency questions

The SPEAKER (14:40): I have reviewed the constituency questions from 27 August 2026. The member for Morwell did not refer to his electorate in his question, and *Rulings from the Chair* states that constituency questions must relate to constituency issues and not encompass broader policy issues. Therefore I rule the member's constituency question out of order.

Bills

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (14:40): I am very pleased to rise to speak on these important reforms. Fundamentally, if we look at the core elements of these reforms, the bill implements the government's commitment to enabling IBAC to follow the money and broadening the definition of 'corrupt conduct' to complement the work of the royal commission and special prosecutor and provide a holistic and comprehensive response to allegations of misconduct on government-funded construction projects. I think it is important to see these reforms within the precise context in which they operate and not in a silo that could potentially distort the extent and the seriousness of what these reforms will undertake in terms of the manner in which they will be able to deliver on integrity in this state. I was concerned that there was a potential diminution – a reducing of the significance – of the reforms which are being undertaken, and I am not sure that that is in any way helpful when we look at the deep and profound way that the reforms are being delivered today before us in the chamber.

There are a couple of other points that I want to go to before exploring in a deeper way the elements of the bill. Initially the Leader of the Opposition was hesitating on the expansion of the definition of 'corrupt conduct'. I think that that should be duly noted when those opposite are seeking to artificially create a perception of moral superiority on these matters, because we know that with this bill in particular the expansion of the definition of 'corrupt conduct' is an incredibly significant part of the reforms that are before us. That changed position in itself certainly illustrates that their seeking to have some sort of superior status when it comes to the integrity that is being underpinned through these reforms is somewhat artificial.

The other point that I think it is necessary to make is that one of the very fundamental elements of the royal commission is having an independent position – that is, the position of the royal commissioner. I think that the member for Brighton assuming or purporting to assume the position of the commissioner in terms of the selection of who should come before the commission was interesting, not in a good way, and intriguing, again not in a good way, because no politician should be deciding who comes before the commission. That is absolutely the premise of that independent position, so I think that that is also unhelpful when we are talking about a fundamental element of this debate, and that is integrity.

Where does the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 sit as we speak, and why are we making these reforms? Under the IBAC act conduct must meet certain requirements to constitute corrupt conduct, such as conduct that adversely affects the honest performance by a public officer or public body of their functions, the misuse of information or material in the course of their performance or conduct that involves recklessly breaching public trust. Currently conduct must also constitute a relevant offence before IBAC can commence an investigation.

‘Relevant offence’ is defined narrowly in the IBAC act, so therein we can see one of the premises upon which we are making or putting forward these reforms to the chamber today. ‘Relevant offence’ is defined narrowly in the IBAC act as ‘an indictable offence’ or any of the common-law offences of ‘attempt to pervert the course of justice’, ‘bribery of a public official’, ‘perverting the course of justice’ or ‘misconduct in public office’. The current definition of ‘corrupt conduct’ limits IBAC from investigating other integrity-compromising behaviours that may not meet the threshold of a criminal offence. To address this issue and give full effect to the government’s commitment, the bill amends the IBAC act to provide that corrupt conduct means conduct that will constitute any offence or a serious disciplinary matter.

I want to come to the issue of follow-the-money powers. These changes provide IBAC with powers comparable to the Victorian Auditor-General in order to investigate corrupt conduct by third-party and private subcontractors where there is a connection between alleged corrupt conduct and the performance of a public function funded by government. To do this, the bill will amend the definitions of ‘public body’ and ‘public officer’ in the IBAC act to include reference to associated entities, drawing on the definitions in the Audit Act 1994. This is in line with the Integrity and Oversight Committee’s report recommendation. The bill seeks to ensure that IBAC’s jurisdiction is enlivened where there is conduct by an associated entity in the performance of a public function on behalf of the state, a public officer or body, with a nexus or connection between the suspected corrupt conduct and the expenditure or use of those public funds or publicly funded project, function or undertaking.

Now I would like to come to the expansion of the definition of ‘corrupt conduct’. The IBAC Commissioner has publicly stated that any proposed follow-the-money reforms should be accompanied by other legislative reforms, including changing the definition of ‘corrupt conduct’. I just want to remind the chamber of what I said at the outset – that the Leader of the Opposition originally did not want to expand the definition of ‘corrupt conduct’. I believe now she has changed her position, but obviously that should be confirmed through debate in the chamber. The bill removes the relevant offence requirement – and this is what I was explaining up until the present moment – and sets a new threshold to enable IBAC to investigate conduct that would constitute either an offence or a serious disciplinary matter. ‘Serious disciplinary matter’ is defined as:

serious misconduct; or

any other matter that constitutes or may constitute grounds for –

termination of employment, appointment or engagement ... or

a significant employment, appointment or contractual penalty ... or

a serious contravention of –

the Code of Conduct set out in Part 3 of the **Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978**; or

the Model Councillor Code of Conduct within the meaning of the **Local Government Act 2020**; or

a code of conduct ... that applies to a responsible Minister of the Crown or a Parliamentary Secretary ...

I think we can all agree that these are comprehensive reforms. No stone is being left unturned, so to speak, when you see the depth in terms of the manner in which these matters can be pursued. They are certainly very comprehensive, and we are not resiling from the significance of these important reforms, because I would like to think, at least on this side of the house, we do have the goal of ensuring that the appropriate matters are brought to light that should be brought to light for the benefit of all Victorians. We are not in any way resiling from those processes, and hence we are driving these reforms in the chamber. I think it is important – and I did speak from the outset as to the context in

which we operate – that the royal commission will have broad terms of reference, so nothing is off limits, and it will be backed by the office of the special prosecutor, so wrongdoers face consequences.

I do not know why the opposition cannot seem to grasp the seriousness of the royal commission's remit. It should not be in any way underestimated. The terms of reference are broad. I am going to take the liberty of saying that, broadly speaking, those terms of reference have had broad approval. We have done that deliberately because it is the right and proper thing to do to ensure transparency in these processes and that the reforms do honour integrity in this state.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:50): I am pleased to rise on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026 – although this bill should be called the 'dragged kicking and screaming bill', because that is exactly what is happening with the Labor Party in this state on this legislation and on this issue. After years of ignoring it, after years of saying that there was no evidence, after years of denigrating those who raised concerns about evidence of corruption on the Big Build, after attacks on the Queensland Commission of Inquiry into the CFMEU and Misconduct in the Construction Industry and the whistleblower there, after attacks on the CFMEU's own paid staff and administrators who were investigating the corruption that had occurred in that union on the Big Build, now we finally have a government purporting to act. It is purporting to act, I would say, in the shadow of an election, at a time when those opposite, particularly those on the back bench facing obliteration in this coming election, have finally said, 'Enough is enough.'

Members interjecting.

Danny O'BRIEN: One Nation is not just coming here. One Nation is coming for lots of you over there – coming for your seat, coming for that seat, coming for lots of them.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Nationals, you have been here long enough to know that you direct your comments through the Chair.

Danny O'BRIEN: Yes, Speaker, I should not pick up interjections from those who are not going to be here next term, including those who have chosen to go but who would have been going anyway. It would be remiss of me to do that. I think there is some false bravado from those opposite. That goes to the heart of this legislation, because this government for so many years, for at least four years now, has been denying there is a problem, has been denying there is an issue on the Big Build. And yet we know that there has been an estimate of at least \$15 billion of taxpayers money lost to corruption on the Big Build. In fact it is surprising that no-one has disputed that, because normally when that figure is raised in this place, someone does dispute it. The government acknowledges there is a problem but always says, 'No, that figure's not right'. If it is not right, what is it? Is it \$10 billion? Is it \$20 billion? Is it a billion dollars? If it is half a billion, is that okay? That seems to have been the issue from those opposite: well, it is not a big problem; it was taxpayers money; no-one got hurt; the CFMEU got looked after; and we are building big things, and people like big things. But in fact people do not like to see their money wasted, and they do not like to see corruption.

I do not think I have seen in my time in politics, let alone as an MP – 25 years around this game – a figure take hold in the public consciousness more than the \$15 billion one.

Members interjecting.

Danny O'BRIEN: There it is. Now those opposite are saying it is not true. Well, if it is not true, what is this legislation for? If it is not true, what is the royal commission for? That is exactly the point that we have been making for a long time: this government cannot get its story straight. It cannot decide whether there is corruption and it might be \$15 billion or whether there is corruption maybe but it is definitely not \$15 billion. We saw the former Premier get into all sorts of strife on 7.30 a couple of months ago, where she could not answer the simple question, 'If it's not \$15 billion of corruption, what is it?' That is the problem for the member for Narre Warren South, the member for

Narre Warren North and all of those over there who are concerned, saying that it is not true. Well, if it is not true, let us see what the royal commission throws up.

This legislation only goes part of the way. We will support this legislation, as the member for Brighton has indicated, because we have been calling for it for years now. Indeed we have moved private members bills and those opposite have opposed them. They opposed those bills, and here they are. That is why I say this bill should be called the 'dragged kicking and screaming' legislation, because finally the Labor Party has realised, on the eve of an election, that Victorians have had enough. They have had enough of the corruption. They have had enough of a Labor government that has turned a blind eye to all of what has been going on on the Big Build, that has been warned about it repeatedly and that has chosen to do nothing.

We heard in question time about one of the centrepieces of this issue where the former Premier, the member for Bendigo East, wrote to IBAC asking them to investigate some of the issues that had been raised in the 'Building bad' series in the *Age* and on Channel 9. She wrote to IBAC knowing – the Premier must have known at the time – that IBAC could not investigate because it did not have follow-the-dollar powers. We heard in question time, and we know from this legislation, that that referral that the member for Bendigo East, the former Premier, made will not be followed up under this legislation. That is why that is one of the amendments the member for Brighton has moved, an amendment that I support.

Those of us on this side support a retrospective element to this. If the current Premier is serious about addressing the corruption that went on on the Big Build, that is probably still going on on the Big Build, then he must allow this legislation to have that retrospective element to it. The royal commission can only go so far; IBAC needs to have the powers to do this, whether that is on the royal commission issues or whether there are other issues. The member for Brighton mentioned in his speech, whether it is the lotto deal that was done on the eve of the budget this year or whether it is other matters that this government has been involved in in its entire 12 years, that it is only half facetious to say that the entire 12 years could be referred to IBAC. But there are things that need to be done, and that is one of the amendments that we have put forward to ensure that this bill is fully retrospective. If Labor is serious about addressing the issues that have been raised in the 'Building bad' series and the issues that Geoffrey Watson SC has raised repeatedly in Queensland, if we want to get to the bottom of it, if we want to genuinely follow the money, then the government needs to address that issue of retrospectivity, and it can do so by supporting the member for Brighton's amendment.

We have other amendments. With respect to timely reporting, we saw the unedifying spectacle of Operation Richmond by IBAC being dragged out for years and years and years. Again, this is an issue that the opposition has sought to have addressed through a private members bill as recently as June, that there be timely reporting of IBAC reports. We have also circulated an amendment with respect to repealing that examinations generally be held in private, which again was a private members bill that the opposition raised back in March. That is to flip the proposition if you like that where it is in the public interest IBAC examinations should be held in public more often than now. Certainly we know that has been a problem. We know that the former Premier, the former member for Mulgrave, was interviewed a number of times by IBAC but none of those examinations were in public. Victorians had no opportunity at the last election to understand why and what had been said by the then Premier, because that was done all in private. We think that there should be a flipping of that and where the public interest is to have those investigations undertaken in public that should be the case.

Finally, our other amendment is to repeal the public interest immunity which enables cabinet ministers to refuse the sharing of certain cabinet material with IBAC. We are not blind to the consequences of this. This is a big public policy decision. But we think that particularly in the last term and a half or so of government there has been too much hidden from public view on the basis of cabinet confidentiality. When it comes to corruption, when it comes to \$15 billion of corruption or more, there needs to be a level of public interest and that public interest immunity should be removed for these certain purposes.

For ministers and former ministers who have access to cabinet material that is of importance to IBAC's investigations, IBAC should have access to that, because we know what the \$15 billion has cost us.

Imagine if we had spent \$15 billion on fixing our roads. Our roads would be in incredible shape if the government had spent some of that money on our roads. What if it had put it towards police to address the crime issues in the state or if it had put it towards the health system where we have got 68,000 people still languishing on waiting lists? That is what this is about. It is about the opportunity cost of corruption that has been allowed to flourish by a government that is now being dragged kicking and screaming to bring in this legislation. We will support it, but it needs to go further.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (15:00): I rise to make a contribution to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026, and I want to begin by expressing my very strong support for our new Premier and his commitment to a package of integrity reforms. I think it is important to remind those opposite that it is a package, and it includes the Royal Commission into the Integrity of Major Public and Civil Infrastructure Construction Projects in Victoria that will deal with many of the issues that the member for Gippsland South has raised and indeed the special prosecutor that is the subject of a different bill before the house that will also address many of those issues. As a third component, the bill in front of us right now brings forward two key changes to IBAC.

I want to set out my support for this bill and for the Premier's broader integrity packages in the context of the rise of One Nation that concerns all of us in this place. I think we all understand that the rise in One Nation is not directly due at all to discussion around Victorian corruption or construction sector corruption – if you look at the timing of it, obviously it is a national trend that has its origins elsewhere – but in the conversations that I have had locally with people who are voting One Nation or are One Nation-curious, as they say, there is no doubt in my mind that some of the issues around the CFMEU and corruption have fuelled the fire of the particular world view that they have.

I say this because I raised in Parliament a few months ago what I thought was a relatively small matter involving the LMCT petrol station on the corner of Gower Street and Plenty Road. It turned out that people who were supporters of LMCT and people who were One Nation voters overlapped a lot, and for some reason that particular post was circulated in a lot of One Nation-voting circles and I received literally thousands of messages, many of them from interstate but a significant number of them – certainly dozens – from people who were local to Preston and Reservoir. I did take the opportunity to talk to them to try and understand where they came from in saying that they were voting for One Nation. Of course amongst One Nation supporters there is a significant component of bigotry and misogyny – some really dark parts to their vote. But another thing that I picked up is that there is, in the minds of One Nation voters, this very common populist narrative. Amongst these One Nation voters there is this belief in a mythical golden age that our country apparently used to enjoy and this notion that our country is in decline from that nostalgic, mythical past. Not only do they believe that our country and our state are in decline but they believe there are simple solutions to this decline that all of the community agrees upon and the only reason that the government is not implementing the solutions that all ordinary Victorians apparently agree upon is because the government is corrupt or captured by these vested unionist woke interests. That is what they believe.

I hear this come through time and time again, and that is the rationale for why you should join Pauline Hanson, who is seen as this kind of plucky outsider who is taking on this evil empire that is corrupt and so forth. It is a very pervasive attitude amongst One Nation voters, and it is one that we recognise: that notion of being plucky outsiders taking on an evil empire is a Hollywood narrative to a certain degree, but unfortunately it is also a narrative that has a much darker history with right-wing authoritarianism over a very long period of time – that notion that everyone agrees with these right-wing people, these right-wing insurgents, and the only reason that people are not acting the way they would like to see policy enacted is because the government is somehow corrupt or wrong.

I have spent some time trying to talk these One Nation voters out of their views, and it is very hard to talk them out of this notion that society is in sort of terminal decline. It is hard to talk them out of the

notion that Pauline Hanson is some sort of plucky outsider, as remarkable as that might be. I have found that you can talk them out of this bit that the government is a corrupt institution acting against the community's interests. And you do that, Acting Speaker Tak – I know you of all people know this very well. You are famous for the amount of doorknocking that you have been doing. We all know that when we knock on doors, we send that really powerful message to people that the system is not a conspiracy against them. In fact what more proof do they need than the fact that someone in a position of authority and power, an elected representative like you, is nonetheless prepared to walk along the streets, as you do – as we all do – and talk to people? That sends a very powerful message that their votes and their views matter.

I do think, Acting Speaker – I wonder if you may have encountered this in your own doorknocking – that the changes we are making with the Premier's integrity package and with this bill before us today also help, because as I say, I think that in that populist narrative that has taken over the discourse amongst these One Nation voters there is that notion that the government has sort of a corrupt conspiracy against them looming large, and the CFMEU and corruption allegations were really fuel on the fire of that particular view. I have certainly noticed doorknocking myself now that the integrity measures that the Premier has announced really do give you some useful ammunition as a way to step them down from voting One Nation, as they are intending to do. I will be honest with you that most of those voters are still pretty conservative people. I often feel that when I am talking them down from One Nation they are just going to vote for the Liberals and not necessarily for me, but I still think it is an important thing to do, because we need to isolate that very bigoted and discriminatory end of the One Nation spectrum and pull people away from that and back to a politics that is more respectful and more inclusive.

I just want to touch on one other matter in the bill, and that is the changes to the definition of 'corrupt conduct', which are a critical component of the bill. I just want to pick up on the fact that within the changes we now incorporate serious contraventions of the code of conduct that we find in the Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978 and indeed any serious contraventions of the ministerial and parliamentary secretary code of conduct. I think it is worth just reflecting that the bill is well designed to ensure we do not go too far there and allow people to use IBAC to essentially prosecute what are just policy differences. I did think the member for Brighton, in his statement there, disagreed with some things that we have done under the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 with respect to a public lottery deal. I think it is important that those policy differences that people might have are not caught up in this process and are not the basis for frivolous referrals to IBAC.

If I can give you one example of a similar gambling-related issue that we have had locally, and this comes back to LMCT, that rewards club that I spoke about earlier. I remind you that these rewards clubs that I am talking about are quite extraordinary businesses. If you look at the typical sort of arrangement you might see in these large rewards clubs, they may take \$100 million a year in revenue from members. They will then pay out about \$20 million a year in prizes, and they may have another \$10 million or so in other expenses, mainly Facebook advertising. But notably that means they then have a \$70 million earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation result, and they then of course have no depreciation because they have no assets, they have no payroll tax to pay because they have no employees, they have no interest because they have no liabilities and they have no land tax because they own no land, and that \$70 million is pure profit. Of course the owner has to pay company tax. They get all of that back as franking credits, and after they pay their income tax, essentially sole traders are walking away with a \$35 million post-tax income. As you would appreciate, anyone who owns a business that can do that can effectively call themselves a billionaire.

I am the last person to stand up in this place and defend Gina Rinehart or Clive Palmer, but you would have to say that at least they earned their billions by organising to go to remote places and extract iron ore and nickel and other commodities that are vital to everyone's lives every day, whereas these new rewards club billionaires have made their billions by making Instagram reels that fleece people on the internet. When the Liberal Party stand up and say, 'This is the next wave of great Australian

entrepreneurialism,' I could not disagree more strongly. I think there is good reason for us to actually legislate to make these people reveal their payout ratios – how much are they taking in, how much are they paying out in prizes – just like every other gambling business has to do. I think there is a reason to ask them to do that retrospectively, and I think there are reasons to ask them how much money they have taken from hardworking Victorians and transferred into their bank accounts in Abu Dhabi.

I put all that to you because that is not something this Parliament has currently done and thought to do. We may yet get to it, but nonetheless, to make this point, that is a particular disagreement that we may have about gambling regulation that I have just set out and that comes up locally. I do not think that alone should be a reason to refer any of us in this place to IBAC because we have not made the changes to section 5 of the Gambling Regulation Act that I just set out. I heard the member for Brighton doing that when he talked about the act, as I say, in a different context of the public lotteries decisions. I just make the point to him that I do not think any of us should be disagreeing about public policy that way in order to generate referrals to IBAC.

But overall I think it is a very important set of integrity reforms that the Premier is bringing forward. I thank him and his team for all the work they have done on it. I commend this bill to the house, and I oppose the amendments circulated by the member for Brighton.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (15:10): I also rise to address the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026, which I have in my hand, which the opposition was briefed on in the last 24 hours or so and which was introduced and second-read with urgency in this chamber earlier today. I say that there is one reason we are here today in this particular circumstance, because the journey that certainly IBAC and I dare say the Victorian people have been on to get us to this today has been a darn long one and perhaps even an unnecessary one. Not to delve too far into ancient history, but I was first elected to this place in 2018, and for my first term in this place between 2018 and 2022 it was a genuine privilege to serve on the Parliament's Integrity and Oversight Committee as its deputy chair. In preparing for this contribution today, I reviewed some of the reports that that committee worked on during the course of the term in which I served as the deputy chair, with evidentiary point after evidentiary point and report after committee report stating quite clearly that the provisions afforded in law to Victoria's Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission were – are – inadequate. And it takes us to this point, the death knock before a Victorian election in some 80-or-so days time, with this Labor government, under its third Premier in this term alone, coming here proposing the bill that we are currently debating.

As previous speakers on behalf of the opposition have stated, we do not oppose this legislation. In fact we support this legislation. We support it because it is something that is better than nothing. But that does not mean that we think this legislation is perfect, and that is entirely why the member for Brighton, the Shadow Attorney-General, has proposed a number of amendments, which I wholeheartedly support and back. Those amendments include the ability for the bill to be made fully retrospective – that is, to remove the limitations of the current bill before us, as per the private members bill which the opposition previously introduced in this place and in the other place. The second of these four amendments is to insert a timely reporting requirement for reports to stop the Operation Richmond-style delay that many in this place and outside this place will be familiar with. It is important that justice is delivered swiftly. Justice delayed is justice denied. The delay in the delivery of that particular report and the delay of the findings of that particular report was frankly unacceptable.

The third amendment that we are proposing repeals that examinations generally be held in private. We believe that if we are to have things such as transparency and accountability as the overarching tenets of good government and the overarching principles on which we enable transparency to be a focus of everything that a state government should do, why is it the preference for hearings or examinations to be held in private? Why should that not be the exception as opposed to the rule? So there is an amendment proposed by the member for Brighton which I commend to the house in relation to that.

Finally, the repeal of the public interest immunity, which enables, for example, cabinet ministers to refuse the sharing of certain cabinet material with IBAC. If we take the framework of transparency and accountability, if we truly believe in integrity in this state, then why shouldn't the considerations of the executive arm of this state, this subnational jurisdiction of Victoria, subject to tight parameters and a tight framework, be made available for consideration by the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission? Do not think I am making an unfounded assertion here, but it is known that to bypass an FOI process or to bypass integrity or scrutiny of a particular thing – a document or a piece of information – all that needs to happen is that it is introduced via the cabinet secretary's office with a cabinet-in-confidence stamp on it and it will never see the light of day under current provisions. If that mechanism is being used to hide information that may in fact shed light on the way hardworking Victorian taxpayers money is being spent and the actions – or in some cases, inaction – of particular government ministers, government departments or senior bureaucrats, then that should very well be the purview of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission.

For this side of politics – for the opposition, for the state's alternative government – integrity is simply not optional. That is why on a number of occasions in this place and in the other place we have sought to introduce a bill that enables IBAC to be strengthened with follow-the-money powers, amongst other things. I remember when that bill was introduced and when the opportunity to debate and to consider that bill in any form was denied by the government who has now brought this piece of legislation to this place at this time. The response from members of the government at the time was, 'Well, you know, if something needs to be investigated, the powers are there, and if it is not IBAC, it is Victoria Police. The powers are there.' But they are clearly not. The same people who were claiming that the powers were there now say that the powers are inadequate and that the powers need to be expanded. The government frankly cannot have it both ways on this point.

When it comes to the alternative government's position on matters of integrity and matters of transparency, we have been quite clear for some time now. We do have a plan to clean up crime and corruption in this state, to enforce the law, to find the money and to stop the rorts. It is what the Victorian people expect of us. They entrust us with the obligation to do that to the very best of our ability. Sadly, over the last 12 years under Andrews and then Allan and now Carroll what the Labor government has demonstrated in my view is that they are incapable of doing that to a degree that is respected, appreciated and expected by the Victorian people.

Victorians are hardworking people, Acting Speaker; you know that. The Victorians in your community and in my community, those mums and dads who work as hard as they can to earn the money to provide for themselves and their families and to pay their bills, and it is only getting harder. For their government, to which the Victorian people gave a degree of trust, to turn around and say, 'We are going to disrespect your money and we are going to allow your hardworking taxpayer money to be rorted' is completely unacceptable. For that reason alone, in November this year we need a change of government.

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (15:20): I rise today to support the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026, and in doing so I recognise how important this institution and the capabilities it has are to the enduring performance of government and therefore this state. Governments are best when they are active, building a better future and doing what matters. A term in power spent managing business and tinkering around the edges is a waste. Every four years we are given a mandate to represent and advocate for brighter prospects and an improved Victoria, and at the heart of that mandate is trust. Trust is not a given for every day in power; it has to be earned. The confidence of the public is a constant pursuit, and where it falters we should do everything in our power to earn it again. That is why Victoria's Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission exists, why the Ombudsman exists and makes the contributions it does and why our parliamentary system is open, accountable and accessible. These are the hallmarks of a balanced system of governance and integrity, but there is more that can be done.

That brings me to the amendments considered today. IBAC does well with the remit and powers it has, but we know that it could do more and be more effective if it had the power to follow the money as this bill prescribes. As a member of the Integrity and Oversight Committee, which made recommendations to the effect of the amendments tabled today, I know how the absence of these powers has frustrated IBAC's work in recent years. As money moves through third parties and associated corporations, IBAC can stall and struggle to compel disclosure. That is annoying, but it is also an easy fix – this bill looks to do just that. Specifically, the bill seeks to investigate suspected corrupt conduct by third parties and private subcontractors where there is a connection between alleged corrupt conduct and the performance of a public function funded by government. Further, it amends the legislative definition of 'corrupt conduct' to capture a broader range of criminal conduct and other integrity-compromising behaviours. Taken together, these reforms complement the work of the royal commission and special prosecutor to prosecute and advance the high standards for public investment and government conduct that we hold so close in our roles as community representatives.

Victorians work hard for their money. They pay their taxes, they contribute to their communities and they place their trust in governments to deliver the services and infrastructure that they need. Whether that money is being used to build a hospital, a school, a road or a rail project or any other piece of public infrastructure, Victorians should be confident that every dollar is being used for its intended purpose. And when there are allegations that public money has been misused, the institutions responsible for investigating corruption must have the powers necessary to follow that money wherever it goes. It is an important reform, because government does not deliver everything itself. Modern government relies on a complex network of contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and other private entities to deliver public services and infrastructure. The public interest does not disappear simply because a government contract is signed, a dollar does not become private money simply because it has passed from a government department to a contractor and a public project does not cease to be a public project because some of the work is performed by a subcontractor. Put simply, accountability cannot stop at the boundary of government; there are checks and balances that we need throughout.

The bill does not allow IBAC to investigate simply because an organisation receives public money. There must be a connection between the suspected corrupt conduct and the performance of a public function, government funding or a publicly funded project. The bill specifically does not allow IBAC to investigate conduct that is unrelated to the performance of public functions merely because public money is somewhere in the background. That is an important safeguard.

Elsewhere the concept of a serious disciplinary matter is particularly important. It captures serious misconduct; conduct that may constitute grounds for termination or a significant employment or contractual penalty; and serious breaches of relevant codes of conduct applying to members of Parliament, ministers, parliamentary secretaries and local government councillors. In other words, this bill recognises that integrity is about more than whether someone has technically committed a particular criminal offence. People entrusted with public power have responsibilities that go beyond the criminal law. They have responsibilities to the public, to their institutions and to the taxpayers who fund the work those institutions undertake. That is particularly important for those of us in this place. Victorians elect us to make decisions in their interests. They expect us to act honestly, transparently and in accordance with the standards attached to public office. This bill makes clear that serious breaches of those standards can fall within IBAC's jurisdiction. It strengthens public confidence in our institutions because it tells Victorians that integrity standards are not merely words written in a code of conduct, they have consequences.

I also welcome the bill's relevance to Victoria's major infrastructure program. While the Big Build has undeniably propelled our state into the 21st century and improved our infrastructure across the board, allegations of impropriety are serious and must be addressed. The royal commission will provide an important mechanism for examining the broader circumstances surrounding allegations of corruption, criminal conduct and serious misconduct in major construction projects. IBAC, as

Victoria's independent anti-corruption agency, must have the jurisdiction to investigate corruption that falls within its remit, and where appropriate information can be shared between IBAC and the royal commission, ensuring that these institutions can work together while respecting their respective independence and responsibilities. That matters, because Victorians should be able to implicitly trust that their concerns will be taken seriously. They should be able to trust that the right institution will have the right powers to follow the evidence and address wrongdoing where it exists.

As the member for Mulgrave I know how much Victorians value the services and infrastructure that governments provide. People want good schools, accessible hospitals and reliable public transport. They want safe roads and thriving communities, and through it all they want and they deserve to know that the money they contribute towards those things is being used for those purposes, not lost through corruption, misconduct or abuse of public trust. The vast majority of people who work in government, the public sector and the private organisations that deliver public projects do the right thing. This scrutiny does not attack, it honours and evinces them and the work they do for our state and all the people who call Victoria home.

I was a member of the Integrity and Oversight Committee that went through the process of writing the report on the adequacy of the legislative framework for IBAC. In putting together the report as a committee we made 31 recommendations with respect to IBAC's legislative framework and broader integrity structures, 29 of which were directed to government. The two remaining recommendations were directed to IBAC specifically, and so it is only appropriate that IBAC responds to those as it sees fit. But of the 29 that were directed to government, the government's response was to take on board 21 of those recommendations and review the other eight. I wish to just thank the members on the IOC with me and the chair, the member for Brunswick, for putting together this report and the recommendations. I thank the government for following through with the majority – 21 of the 29 – and reviewing eight. I think this is really important for our communities. The follow-the-money laws are going to be really important, demonstrating trust and integrity. I commend this bill to the house.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (15:30): Labor's Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026, introduced today, shows exactly why Victorians cannot trust this government. This bill is a test of the Premier's integrity. Labor denied, dismissed and downplayed corruption within Victoria's Big Build, and now, after promising Victoria decisive action, Labor has introduced a bill that strengthens IBAC's powers but deliberately prevents those powers from reaching back into the corruption that has occurred already and that forced this legislation to be put forward in the first place.

This is reform with the rear-view mirror deliberately blacked out. The Premier declared integrity was no longer optional. But integrity is not a slogan. It is not something government discovers three months before an election. Integrity means uncovering what happened, following the money and holding everyone involved to account regardless of their position, their union, their company or their political connections. Without retrospectivity this bill protects the past instead of exposing it and instead of holding those who need to be held to account to account. Victorians are entitled to ask: what is Labor so determined to prevent IBAC from discovering?

The purposes of this bill are to strengthen IBAC's powers, clarify the definition of 'corruption', give IBAC the ability to follow the money and hold the community who were involved in this corruption, whether it was criminals or politicians, to account. We support the objective that IBAC must have the powers and resources required to investigate corruption and hold perpetrators to account, but members came into this chamber this sitting week without knowing any of the detail of this long-promised legislation. It was not until last night that we discovered the fundamental flaw in the strengthening powers of this bill, which is no retrospectivity. That means IBAC may still be unable to investigate the very conduct that exposed the need for these reforms.

Labor cannot spend years presiding over a system, finally acknowledge that corruption has occurred and then draw a legislative line underneath everything that has already happened. The former Premier,

Jacinta Allan, who spent a lot of time saying there was nothing to see here, eventually agreed to refer the allegations to IBAC. IBAC responded to that referral by saying they did not have the legislative powers to investigate this fully. I am convinced that she knew that was the answer. And now, with this law passing as is, the police cannot investigate it. The people cannot be held to account. The government knew about that limitation, it knew the existing law was inadequate, yet the bill before the house still refuses to give IBAC the power to go back and properly examine what has already occurred. It is not good enough.

The new Premier Ben Carroll cannot distance himself from that record. He was not an innocent bystander. He sat at the cabinet table. He stood beside the former Premier. He was part of the government when these decisions were made, when warnings were ignored and when demands for accountability were rejected. He promised a royal commission, he promised to get to the bottom of corruption, but this bill prevents IBAC from looking back at the conduct Victorians most urgently want investigated and holding those involved to account.

That is why the opposition has put forward four essential amendments. The first one is full retrospectivity. IBAC's strengthened powers must have retrospectivity so it can investigate past conduct, follow the money and hold responsible individuals to account. We demonstrated our commitment to this last March when we introduced a private members bill that gave that strength and made those powers fully retrospective. That legislation passed the upper house as a law, but when it reached the lower house the Labor government would not even allow it to be introduced to this lower house and be debated. That is just disgraceful. And now Labor wants the credit for strengthening IBAC while holding back the very power needed to investigate the corruption that brought us here today.

The second amendment is timely reporting. IBAC investigations and reports must be subject to appropriate reporting timeframes, and Victorians cannot endure another situation and the cost of matters such as we saw with Operation Richmond, where the report was caught in delays and legal arguments for seven years. Justice delayed is accountability denied, and reports cannot be allowed to remain hidden until political damage has passed or the people responsible have moved on.

The third amendment is public examinations. Where it is in the public interest, IBAC examinations should have the capability to be held publicly. Labor's model allows critical examinations to continue behind closed doors. Public examinations improve transparency, build community confidence – which really needs rebuilding – and allow Victorians to see that powerful individuals are being subjected to proper scrutiny. Corruption thrives in secrecy. Accountability requires sunlight. I come to our fourth amendment, but firstly let me just recap on those three amendments. We put three private members bills into the Parliament. The Liberal-Nationals have been committed to integrity all along.

The fourth amendment is a new concept that we have introduced today, and that is that the public interest immunity must not become a shield that allows former Premiers, ministers or cabinet members to withhold documents from IBAC. As it currently stands, Premiers or cabinet ministers or previous cabinet ministers can simply say, 'No. That document is held in private confidence of the cabinet.' That will be removed. I believe that if IBAC believe they need that information, they will only ask for it in those circumstances, and they should be given what they need to properly investigate. Political office must never place someone beyond scrutiny. Cabinet confidentiality cannot become a hiding place for the evidence of corruption.

This is not an abstract debate without legal wording. Corruption has consequences for every Victorian family. An estimated \$15 billion has been lost through corruption – possibly up to \$30 billion – criminal infiltration and misconduct associated with major projects. That is taxpayers money, earned through hardworking Victorians. Imagine what that money could have delivered: better hospitals, properly maintained roads, police stations, more schools, stronger mental health services, essential infrastructure and roads, roads, roads – the very symbol of how degraded this state is. Our roads are in an appalling state.

Victorians do not simply want IBAC to identify corruption. They want to follow the money, recover it where it can be recovered and hold every participant accountable, whether they are criminals, contractors, union officials, public servants or members of the government. That is what the new Premier said he would do. The Premier's words repeatedly collide with this government's actions. He said crime would be a priority and police stations would remain open, yet another four closed this week. He said he would fix Victoria's roads, but let us remember he was the roads minister when he presided over a \$214 million reduction in our annual roads budget. He said road maintenance would be brought back in-house – after the government had already privatised spray sealing work essential to road maintenance a week earlier. He promised to scrap the government's hidden public transport tax, but only after he had been caught and he had his hand in the till. He declared that integrity was no longer optional, yet his government had secretly engaged consultants to examine a further tax on home owners to fund his Suburban Rail Loop. Now he promises to confront corruption while introducing legislation that cannot reach back into the corruption already uncovered.

This is not a fresh start. It is the same government, the same cabinet and the same pattern, with only a different person standing in front. We will support as Liberals under a Jess Wilson government a fresh start that offers stronger powers for IBAC because Victoria desperately needs them. But we will not pretend this bill is complete and we will not allow Labor to use the language of integrity while shielding its own record from investigation. Our amendments are straightforward: we make the powers fully retrospective, require timely reporting, allow public examinations and prevent cabinet secrecy from obstructing IBAC. If the Premier wants genuinely to restore trust, he will support these amendments. If Labor votes them down, Victorians will see this bill for exactly what it is: a carefully constructed promise of accountability that stops precisely where Labor's own accountability begins. The Premier cannot erase years by changing the name on his office door. He was there. He sat at the cabinet table. He supported the decisions. He cannot now distance himself from their consequences. Integrity is demonstrated through action, not declared in a press conference.

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (15:40): If Labor votes down the amendments presented by the opposition, somehow Labor lacks integrity? I have sat in this chamber and listened to the opposition howl for a royal commission, and now what are they doing? They are howling that it is no good. The terms of reference are open, and people have admitted that the terms of reference are transparent, and they are howling and saying, 'It's no good. Don't do it.' What else? They have been howling and saying, 'Give IBAC follow-the-money powers.' We are giving it that in this bill, and what are they doing? They are actually howling about it again, so whatever we do is never good enough for them. And it is a shame, because we have listened to the community, we have listened to all sides of Parliament and we are actually doing the work that we are doing and that I am pretty sure they on that side are incapable of doing, especially as a Liberal–One Nation coalition.

I am very pleased to speak to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026, and I am very happy to say that this bill amends the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 to implement recommendations of the Integrity and Oversight Committee's report into the adequacy of the legislative framework for IBAC to broaden the definition of 'corrupt conduct' and give IBAC the ability to follow the money. They are probably the two most important things in this bill. They are the two things that the opposition have been calling for and the public have been asking for.

Before I get into what this all means and how we will go about it, I would just like to thank my colleagues on the Integrity and Oversight Committee (IOC) for the work done in the report that was handed down last year. I thank the chair, the member for Brunswick, for his calm guidance and his ability to always listen and hear. I thank the member for Rowville, the member for Southern Metro and the member for South-Eastern Metropolitan, both in the other place, and the member for Mildura, the member for Mulgrave and of course the member for Narre Warren North. It was great being on the committee. I would also like to thank the secretariat, who did so much work: Sean Coley, Dr Chloë Duncan, Tom Hvala, Whitney Kapa, Emma Daniel –

Dylan Wight interjected.

Paul MERCURIO: you did a little bit, but not that much – Maria Marasco and Bernadette Pendergast. My thanks to you all. And the member for Tarneit, thanks for quite a bit.

I want to acknowledge the work that has been going on over the last 24 months that has resulted in the Labour Hire Authority cancelling construction licences for 164 firms and refusing 47 licence applications. Additionally Victoria Police's Taskforce Hawk has laid more than 90 criminal charges as part of the ongoing investigations into corruption, extortion, drug trafficking and secret commissions on the Big Build. Good work has been done, but clearly that is not enough, so I am extremely pleased that the Premier in his first act as Premier not only called a royal commission, setting out broad and transparent terms of reference, but also listened to the report handed down by the IOC recommending IBAC have, among other things, the ability to broaden the definition of 'corruption' and the granting of follow-the-money powers.

Let me tell you a little bit about what that actually means for this bill in plain terms, because at the end of the day that is what matters. People do not want the legal detail. They want to know: can the watchdog actually do its job? Right now IBAC's hands are tied more than most people realise. Before IBAC can even open an investigation, whatever has happened has to line up with a very short list of specific crimes – things like bribery of a public official or perverting the course of justice. If it is not on that list, IBAC cannot touch it. That means real misconduct, the kind that should absolutely be looked into, can slip through the cracks simply because it does not fit a narrow legal box. IBAC itself has said this and so has the Integrity and Oversight Committee. It is a gap, and everyone who has looked at it agrees that it needs fixing. We heard IBAC loud and clear.

This bill fixes it. It widens what counts as corrupt conduct so that it is not just about a short list of specific crimes anymore. Any criminal offence can now be considered. On top of that, we are adding something new – serious misconduct that is bad enough to get someone sacked or bad enough to breach the codes of conduct that apply to MPs, ministers, parliamentary secretaries and local councillors – so if an elected official does something so far out of line that it would cost anyone else their job then IBAC can now look into it. That is a fair standard. If you hold public office, you should be held to it, the same as anyone else.

Here is the part I think most people will actually care about, and that is follow-the-money powers. At the moment, IBAC's ability to investigate gets murky the second a private company or a subcontractor or a sub-subcontractor gets involved. Even if the company is being paid with public money to deliver a public project, the lines get blurry about what IBAC can and cannot look at, and that has created real headaches when a project involves a mix of government and private players, which let us be honest, most big projects do these days. This bill sorts that out. It brings private contractors and subcontractors, what the bill calls 'associated entities', into IBAC's reach, using the same kind of definition the Auditor-General already works with. So if a private company is doing work funded by the public and there is a link between the work and alleged corrupt conduct, IBAC can now follow the money and investigate. It does not matter whether the dollar passes through a government department first or goes straight into a construction site; if it is public money being spent on a public project, IBAC can now look at where it went and how it was used. That is a good thing.

I want to be up-front about the limits here too, because this is not a blank cheque for IBAC to go poking through every private business that has ever cashed a government cheque. The conduct still has to be connected to a public project or public function. This is not about giving IBAC unlimited reach, it is about closing an obvious loophole that has let bad behaviour hide behind private contracts.

There is also some sensible housekeeping in the bill, tidying up a few gaps that IBAC itself flagged and making sure other integrity laws work properly alongside these changes – nothing flashy, just making sure the machinery actually runs the way it was meant to run.

On timing, IBAC will be able to apply these new powers to complaints and investigations that are already sitting with them but have not finished yet. What it will not do is let IBAC go back and reopen cases that have already been dealt with and closed. I believe that is the right call. We are not rewriting the past, we are making sure the tools are sharp enough for what is in front of IBAC right now and what is still to come. Of course if there is new information or if there are new referrals, then IBAC have the ability to investigate those if they wish, which I would call retrospective in some cases. These new powers will kick in the day after this bill gets royal assent, so IBAC is not left waiting around. The one exception is for those newly captured private contractors and subcontractors, who will get six months before they are required to start reporting corrupt conduct themselves. That is a reasonable amount of time to let those organisations get their heads around a whole new set of obligations, and it was actually IBAC who asked for that runway.

I will also say that IBAC and Integrity Oversight Victoria have both been consulted through this process, and they are both broadly supportive of what is in this bill, and that matters. This is not something dreamed up in isolation. It has been shaped with the very agencies who will be using these powers. And this bill does not stand alone; it sits alongside the royal commission the Premier set up, with real powers to compel evidence and hold public hearings, looking across the construction industry, from companies to unions to labour hire firms and to the government itself. It is the commissioner who decides what is relevant and who needs to answer questions, not the government. That is exactly how it should be, and that is exactly how it should work.

There is more to come. The committee's report made 31 recommendations. The government has backed a large majority of them, with the rest being worked through by a group made up of IBAC, the Ombudsman, Integrity Oversight Victoria and Victoria Police. It will report back next year ahead of a further round of reforms.

This bill delivers the two big things that people have been asking for. It is a positive step forward, and I am proud to support it. I thank the Premier for his steadfast commitment and approach to this government's integrity, for his fearless fight for transparency and for doing the right things so the people of Victoria get the answers they are asking for and the answers they deserve. I commend the bill to the house.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:50): I rise to speak on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026. By my count, this is the third time in this term of Parliament alone that I have risen to speak in favour of legislation to expand the jurisdiction of IBAC by broadening the definition of 'corrupt conduct' under the act to finally give our anti-corruption watchdog in Victoria the powers that it has been calling for and that the community have been calling for for years and to make it work to the same standard as other jurisdictions, like New South Wales. Three times this term the Greens introduced this legislation and three times it was voted down, so this is the first time that I have risen to speak in favour of this legislation without being greeted with howls of derision and the first time, we hope, the bill will not indeed be voted down by both Labor and the Liberal-National parties.

In 2022, again in 2024 and again earlier this year in 2026 my Greens colleague the member for Brunswick Tim Read tried to introduce legislation to strengthen IBAC's jurisdiction by expanding the definition of 'corrupt conduct' beyond what is currently in the act. As is, it needs to be an indictable offence in order for IBAC to investigate. An indictable offence is an incredibly high bar, and it is a high bar that does not exist, for example, in the New South Wales or federal legislation. But it did exist here in Victoria, which meant our IBAC, our anti-corruption watchdog, had so many things referred to it that it simply could not investigate. The member for Brunswick also chaired the Integrity and Oversight Committee for the last four years and did an incredible job – I know that has been recognised across the chamber – and the IOC that he chaired recommended the reforms that we see in this bill today. I know that he is following this debate at home, and I want to acknowledge that we would simply not be here today without his bloody-minded determination to continually campaign on this

issue, to continue to talk about our anti-corruption watchdog and integrity and to continue to talk about expanding IBAC's jurisdiction.

I remember Tim taking me aside about a year ago and saying, 'Just let's wait, Ellen. Integrity might be a key issue at the election in November.' What foresight he had. It was like he had a crystal ball and could see what was going to happen in the future, because integrity has become the key issue this election. He did this campaigning. He was concerted and determined in seeing this through to the end to fix our anti-corruption watchdogs, despite opposition from both the Labor and the Liberal parties. When the member for Brunswick previously introduced legislation, Labor, as I said, opposed it.

As I was writing this speech, I looked back at some of the reasons that Labor Party MPs gave for their opposition to giving IBAC the powers that it needed. I have to say their reasons were dubious, to say the least. One Labor MP said the Greens were inviting mayhem in proposing that we allow IBAC to investigate politicians' dodgy behaviour if that behaviour was legal. I mean, how dare we? How dare we create mayhem by suggesting that our integrity agencies actually investigate matters of integrity? How dare we suggest that dodgy politicians be held to account for their behaviour to the same standard as in New South Wales? But here we are. Those excuses given by the Labor government clearly do not hold water anymore. Now that Labor is under threat at the election, with an electorate that is simply fed up with a lack of integrity in politics, what does Labor finally do? They have come to the table; they have had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the table, but they are finally here.

I do not take any pride in pointing this fact out, only immense frustration that it has taken this long and that Labor only brought this legislation at the eleventh hour before an election, when they were forced to by the electorate. I know that frustration is also felt in the community. We have a Victorian community that is aching for just the bare minimum of political integrity standards here in Victoria. All the community is asking for is the equivalent of what we have in other states: an anti-corruption watchdog that can actually do its job and is not hobbled by the government of the day, who is scared about what it might find.

In looking back at the speeches that I have given over this term, at the times we have tried to introduce it, it did cause me to reflect on something that I often hear again and again from Labor MPs and candidates. I have run in elections three times now up against Labor candidates. What I hear time and time again from Labor MPs or candidates running in progressive seats, where we have a progressive population, is things like, 'Look, I accept that Labor are too weak on issues like climate change or social justice or integrity and that the Greens have stronger policies. But despite this, you should elect me, because I will work to change things from inside the Labor tent and try and change the Labor Party.' And they desperately seek to reassure voters that they will secretly be doing the right thing behind closed doors, even when the Labor Party continues to do the wrong thing on the floor of Parliament. So if there is one reflection or lesson to be drawn from Labor MPs blocking the Greens IBAC legislation over all these years, it is what complete and utter dog poo those statements from Labor politicians about working inside the tent are. We have witnessed – I have witnessed over 12 long years – that Labor MPs were not secretly working inside the tent to try to fight corruption or change our integrity systems. They were not doing that. What they were doing instead was spending their time in this place voting against, speaking against and blocking the Greens bill to reform our IBAC legislation. And at every turn, they were deflecting, they were defending and they were trying to desperately turn attention away from the Labor government's own corruption and misconduct.

It was a Greens-led IOC, Integrity and Oversight Committee, inquiry report and a Greens MP, the member for Brunswick, who had to bring many of the inadequacies of the IBAC legislation to light. That is what has led to these reforms, and much of this bill is directly lifted from that work. To people who come to me and say, 'How do you make change? How do you make change in our political system?' I often say that it is often our job as people –

Juliana Addison interjected.

Ellen SANDELL: Someone from the other side is saying ‘Join the Labor Party.’ I do not think she has listened to the speech that I just gave about why joining the Labor Party is the exact opposite of what gets you this change. It is actually voting Greens that gets you these bills. So many times people come to me and they ask, ‘How do you make change?’ and I say that people in civil society who want to make change, part of what they need to do, part of what civil society, the Greens and others who want to make change do, is put ideas on the table or on the shelf. What often happens is the Greens or the community put ideas on the table and they sit there for years while Labor laughs at them or ignores them or fights them. You know that old saying, ‘First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win’? Well, often it is the community, civil society or the Greens who put ideas on the table and say, ‘This needs to be fixed,’ and Labor do everything they can to stop that happening. They ignore it, they laugh at it or they fight it. Yet one day an event comes along – a scandal, a corruption scandal, an external event, an internal event – that changes the political climate and changes the political game, and all of a sudden Labor have a problem that they need to fix. And what do they do? They do not have any ideas of their own, so they go to that table and they go, ‘Oh my goodness, what ideas can we pick up from this table that someone else has already written down for us?’ Then they pick up the easiest one to implement.

That is exactly what has happened here. The Greens have been putting IBAC reform on the table for years and years, and finally when Labor is engulfed in a huge corruption scandal – \$15 billion – and has a huge political problem they go, ‘Oh my God, what are we going to do about this? We need to fix this quick. Go to the table and see what ideas people have put down. The Greens have put down an IBAC reform idea. Let’s pick it up and run with it.’ They pretend that they were going to do it all along, but we all know they were never going to do it unless they were forced to. I think we should rename this bill. Maybe I should move an amendment. I do not get a chance to move amendments, because the Labor government will not go into consideration in detail, so I do not get to move any amendments. But I would like to move an amendment that renames this bill the ‘Tim Read, Greens member for Brunswick’ bill, because I think he deserves so much credit for this bill coming before the house.

I have spent a bit of time talking about the Labor Party, but let us have a talk about the Liberal Party. Let us remember that the Liberal Party also repeatedly voted down the Greens’ attempts to reform IBAC, expand its jurisdiction and allow for public hearings. Today it looks like they have changed their tune. They have read the political mood. They have realised that the Victorian people want some integrity in politics and that they cannot hide behind a weak Labor Party anymore on a unity ticket, so now the Liberals pretend that they have always held this position of wanting to reform IBAC. All I will say is ‘Welcome to the party.’ This Liberal opposition to IBAC reforms happened as recently as this year. At the same time as they were out in public and in the media calling out corruption on the Big Build they were in this chamber voting with Labor to make sure IBAC could not investigate that same corruption. I mean, you could not write about it.

When the Liberal Party created IBAC – it was the Liberal Party who created our anti-corruption watchdog in the first place – they deliberately ignored a recommendation from the Honourable Stephen Charles AO KC, who chaired the committee to set up the agency. He recommended narrowing the definition of what they could investigate. As Premier Baillieu’s chief of staff at the time Tony Nutt said:

... we’ve put in all sorts of constraints and controls to ensure that the kind of generalised allegation ... has been much more severely constrained ...

Essentially what this means is that from the outset Victoria’s IBAC was established not to investigate and expose corruption, but to protect politicians’ reputations, to ensure that the definition of ‘corruption’ was so narrow, that the bar was so high, that dodgy behaviour from politicians that might get them sacked in any other workplace could not be investigated. This was borne out almost immediately after IBAC became operational in 2013, which was just before I got elected, when the Deputy Premier and Leader of the Nationals Peter Ryan, then member for Gippsland South – my

nanna was a huge supporter – was engulfed in an alleged conspiracy to overthrow the police commissioner. That was unable to be investigated by IBAC. As far as Labor and the Liberals were concerned, that outcome was exactly how it should be. Serious allegations, allegations that went fundamentally to the integrity of a politician, were unable to be investigated by IBAC, and thus political reputations were maintained. It was a pattern that was to be repeated again and again under the Andrews government and under the Allan government.

In fact IBAC's definition of 'corrupt conduct' having to be an indictable offence so handicapped what corruption it could investigate and was so effective in protecting the reputations of politicians and public figures that Victorian politicians were falling over themselves to self-refer their dodgy shenanigans to the agency, knowing that that would look good in the media: 'Oh, I've referred myself to IBAC. I can't possibly have done anything bad.' They knew full well those allegations could not be investigated and that the referral was meaningless. This happened with Matthew Guy's lobster with a mobster meal. It happened with former Premier Jacinta Allan and the Big Build. She referred the allegations to IBAC, but that really came back to bite her because it was exposed very quickly that she knew full well that those allegations could not be investigated by IBAC because they did not have the jurisdiction.

We had all of these politicians out there waving around fake IBAC referrals, trying to look good to the public but knowing full well they meant nothing and they were simply there to try and hoodwink the public. Even the dodgiest public agencies got in on the act: VicForests, for example, an agency that has a long history of losing taxpayer money, dodgy behaviour and allegedly surveilling ordinary citizens to protect their reputation, referred themselves to the anti-corruption commission in 2022 after some truly dodgy practices, again knowing full well that those practices could not be investigated.

I think when we are talking about integrity we should not just talk about anti-corruption; we should talk about broader integrity reforms that are needed in this place, because we know that Labor and the Liberals have also worked together to block a bunch of other really important integrity reforms that we still do not have in Victoria. At the same time as the Liberals, for example, have been publicly calling out Labor's debt and ability to fund and manage major projects, they also voted against Greens amendments which would have put a non-government chair on our Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. At the moment our Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, which is supposed to oversee and hold the government to account when it comes to their budgets, is chaired by a government member and cannot do the work that it is supposed to, like they do federally, to hold governments to account on their budgets. But the Liberals and the Greens had the numbers to change that. We put forward an amendment to change that. The Liberals, had they voted with us, would have changed that, and we would have had a non-government chair of PAEC. But the Liberals chose not to do that because they also do not want scrutiny and transparency and integrity when they happen to get into government, if that, God forbid, ever happens. Just last week in fact the Liberals voted with Labor to oppose a commonsense motion calling on the government to uphold the ministerial code of conduct and ban ministers from accepting gifts and VIP tickets from the gambling industry and other industries that they are supposed to regulate. We had Labor and Liberals vote against that.

We know that the Westminster tradition of ministerial responsibility and deliberative cabinet decision-making has really gone by the wayside, particularly over the last 12 years, and departments providing frank and fearless advice to government are frozen out by an expanded executive style of political government; that much of the public service has been politicised; and that government no longer respects the standing orders of this place or the other house with regard to releasing documents or conventions allowing non-government business to be brought before this house. We know that ministers are free to accept gifts and inducements from lobbyists and corporate interests in areas they are supposed to be regulating and that the same ministers, when they retire, go onto board positions in these same corporations, accept unadvertised positions with government agencies or get jobs as lobbyists for the gas industry or for the racing industry et cetera. These are all deeply concerning

integrity issues in our politics that need addressing, but unfortunately we have Labor and Liberals on a unity ticket in opposing them.

This IBAC bill that is being brought forward today, of course the Greens will be supporting it, but it was urgent 15 years ago. Let us be clear about that. It was urgent 15 years ago, and in true Labor fashion, they have brought it here at 5 minutes to midnight, right before an election, and they have brought it here with a whole bunch of loopholes and carve outs, which is also a very common thing for Labor to do. When they want to do a good thing, you have always got to look for the big loophole. So there are a number of amendments that the Greens will be moving in the other place. I will not circulate them here because we do not have a consideration-in-detail stage. The government has blocked us from being able to even put forward our amendments in the lower house, but in the upper house we will be putting them forward. They will be things like moving amendments to enable IBAC to make findings of corrupt conduct rather than findings some may pass off as 'educational' findings; to better enable IBAC to table reports in Parliament without undue delay; removing exceptional circumstances as the threshold for public hearings to have greater transparency and align it with New South Wales, where it is just things that are in the public interest, for example; and also making the ministerial code of conduct public, because now you can be taken to IBAC for a breach of the ministerial code of conduct, but that ministerial code of conduct is not actually public, so how would anyone –

Nathan Lambert interjected.

Ellen SANDELL: Sorry, member for Preston, it is not required to be made public. That is up to the government of the day. We also have some concerns about the retrospectivity clauses and whether they are being limited in this bill, and we will seek to look at amendments around that as well.

I want to acknowledge a few things in my last 30 seconds. I want to acknowledge the Honourable Stephen Charles AO KC; the Honourable Robert Redlich AM KC; Geoffrey Watson SC; the team at the Centre for Public Integrity for their expertise and long-running campaigns to expand IBAC's jurisdiction; the work of Nine reporter Nick McKenzie, who in many ways has been left doing the anti-corruption investigations that IBAC was prevented from doing; and of course the member for Brunswick for his tireless work in campaigning, in legislating, in being the chair of the IOC and in holding governments to account, whatever their stripes. I think Victorians expect a high standard of integrity in our Parliament, and you cannot get any higher standard of integrity than the Greens member for Brunswick. I know he is watching at home, and he should be very proud.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (16:10): I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a contribution on what is a very significant and important bill that is before the house this afternoon and follow on from the half an hour that we had from the previous speaker, who took us through some of the changes and the mechanics within the piece of legislation that is before the house and some of the so-called achievements of the Greens political party over the past 12 years. I, as you will accept, have a different view and believe in the record of this government when it comes to investment in community services, in protection of our environment and in public transport, education and health. This government have indeed made sure that we have always focused on local communities and not just made commentary from the sidelines.

Notwithstanding that, I do want to make the observation that the vast majority of Victorians in our state I believe do do the right thing. They support their family, they work hard in their local community and they go about their business, whether it be any form of employment, with the very best interests at heart. What we know and understand is that we have got a growing population and a growing economy in this state, and we have set out to deliver a record amount of public infrastructure, including roads and schools – and I can see some young people in the gallery today – and we have made sure that we are delivering for all of those communities across all of those services. It has required sustained and significant long-term investment to deliver projects like the Metro Tunnel and the removal of 94 dangerous and congested level crossings and so many more projects right across this state. I want

to take the opportunity to acknowledge all of the people that work incredibly hard on those projects, all of those people that do the right thing each and every day.

What this bill before the house this afternoon deals with is making sure that for those people that do the wrong thing, IBAC has the powers and the resources to be able to tackle corruption when and where it occurs. That is in the context of all of our agencies doing incredibly important work in making sure that when those criminal elements and others conduct themselves in a way that is not appropriate, that is dangerous and hurts others or that steals money from the state, we have got an opportunity to call it out. We have got an opportunity to do that via our integrity agencies.

I do love listening to the member for Hastings' contributions, because he is a very fine speaker – as are you, Acting Speaker Kathage. I am not reflecting on the Chair. The member for Hastings said in his contribution that it is indeed the commissioner who makes determinations on the matters that come before him or her around what is corrupt conduct. I will go to some of the changes in the legislation soon, but it is an important point that the member made, because sometimes when you come into this place, whether it be in question time or at other opportunities, you hear those opposite making all sorts of assertions and all sorts of wild claims and accusations that effectively put the leader of the government, the Premier, or other responsible ministers in charge of our integrity agencies. We know that is just not how the Westminster system of Parliament operates.

We know that we equip our agencies, whether that be Victoria Police, IBAC, the courts or any other agency that deals with these matters, with the powers and the resources that they need to do the job. That effectively enables the Parliament to provide for that power, but it also enables the process whereby we have independence. No-one in this place would want to see any form of cutting across those processes, and this is why this is really important, and it is a really important point that the member made.

I do also want to take the opportunity to acknowledge that those processes can always be strengthened and they can always be improved. Listening to some of the contributions from those in other parts of the chamber from other parties through the course of debate on this fine Tuesday, what is really clear is that we as a government always reserve the right to improve and change legislation when and where it need be. Those opposite, as I mentioned before, always want to go for the cheaper road, always want to blur the lines on what is a separation of powers, and we make sure that those processes are followed and that those processes are done in a timely, effective and efficient way. We will do that at each and every opportunity that we get, because it is really important to be able to do that.

The legislation before the house this afternoon – and others have gone to these matters – enables for the beefing-up, the strengthening of powers that IBAC has to follow the money and investigate suspected corrupt conduct by third-party and private subcontractors where there is a connection between alleged corrupt conduct and the performance of a public function funded by the government, and amend the definition of 'corrupt conduct' to capture a broader range of criminal conduct and other integrity-compromising behaviours. The bill implements the government's commitment to enable IBAC to follow the money, broaden the definition of 'corrupt conduct' to complement the work of the royal commission and special prosecutor and provide for holistic and comprehensive responses to allegations of misconduct on government-funded construction projects – there are a lot of words in that. It is about beefing-up, and it is about making sure that they have got the power and the resources to be able to do the job.

As I mentioned before, there are dangerous and serious and criminal outfits that have indeed got their mitts on a part of our state's money. As has been alluded to in other contributions, and as has been outlined by the Premier, this of course is never okay. The work of the royal commission, the beefing-up of IBAC powers and the work that is done by these arrangements make for a more robust and stronger system, and that is what we should be striving for. I go back to that point around making those powers, and the work that is done by IBAC is really important. The work that they do right across all of our integrity agencies is really important. I want to take the opportunity to thank those that have

been involved in the process of bringing this to the house. It sends, again, a serious message to those that want to do the wrong thing: you will inevitably be found out, and you will be dealt with in the strongest possible fashion.

For the changes that are contained within the bill that is before the house this afternoon, on top of the announcements that have been made by the Premier and by others, we know that the work that needs to be done to ensure that the right thing is done is the most important opportunity that we have. For those people that want to do the wrong thing, then you indeed will be dealt with. For those that work within the industry – and I make this point again that it is the vast majority of people – this is really important and makes for a better, stronger system. There have indeed been so many that have been harmed by others who want to use intimidation, who want to be violent, and that is never appropriate and nor will the government ever accept that. We know that the changes in this legislation will give IBAC those strengthened powers. The work of the royal commission and the special prosecutor does as well, and we will deal with those matters through the Parliament over the course of the week.

But I do want to take the opportunity, as I have done, to thank those that have done this important work, that continue to contribute to making Victoria a fairer and better place, for making Victoria a place where every single worker is valued, every single worker is respected and everyone is treated in a way that makes all of our agencies and all of those groups of workers proud of the work that they do. That is the goal, and we want to make sure that those powers are used in an appropriate way. We want to make sure that those powers that are needed are given. I want to say thanks for all the work that has been done. With those comments, I commend the bill to the house.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (16:20): I rise today to speak on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026, and from the outset I would like to support the amendments that were put forward by the member for Brighton, which in my view address some of the key limitations of the legislation that is before us today. We know that the Liberals and Nationals have been leading the way when it comes to fighting for improved powers, particularly follow-the-money powers, when it comes to IBAC. We know that this is required, and we, the Liberals and Nationals, have been fighting for this because we have seen, and I have seen over the past 12 years in my time in the Victorian Parliament, an increasing level of what would be termed grey corruption within the system to a point where it is becoming quite overt. We have got a very strong history now of former Premiers who have deliberately tried to subvert the course of IBAC and deliberately tried to use loopholes within IBAC's own rules and powers in order to protect their own political future and own political gain, and that is outrageous. It is outrageous because it undermines democracy and governance and the trust that every Victorian has that members of the Victorian Parliament are doing the right thing with taxpayer money when they are elected to this place.

The specific clauses I would like to speak to today involve clauses 7 and 8. The current clauses within the government's legislation before us today give the expanded regime limited retrospective application to certain precommencement conduct, including pending complaints and incomplete investigations, but exclude matters already dismissed, referred to another body or completed. In particular, members of the Liberal and National parties are very concerned, because while we have a Premier that today says that integrity is no longer optional – it is interesting to hear that, might I add, from the current Premier given that on the Monday when he was Deputy Premier apparently integrity was optional over the past time that he has been in cabinet – it has always been optional within the Labor Party to have integrity. I do not know when it first became a concept that when you are in government, you do not have to always hold integrity, that it is sometimes optional. What an outrageous thing for the current Premier to say, to try and put a line in the sand and say, 'I'm not like those ones before me, those other ones.' And the Premier actually named former Premier Andrews and former Premier Allan as being those two premiers that he was nothing like – that integrity was optional under Labor's Premier Andrews and Labor's Premier Allan, but now we are supposed to believe in some alternate universe that, weeks out from an election, all of a sudden we have got a new Premier who believes that integrity is not optional.

But what is one of the first things that he has done? The Premier has introduced IBAC laws that would mean that IBAC still cannot investigate any of the corruption claims over the past 12 years. That is not what the public expect. It does not pass the pub test. It does not pass the pub test that we want IBAC to have more powers, including follow-the-money powers, but not for the past 12 years when we have had a Labor government in Victoria. That does not cut it. That is what I hear from Victorians right around my electorate of Lowan. They know that this is the same old Labor government that are trying to use legislation to hide their deceit and corruption in order to get ahead. It is simply not believable.

Members interjecting.

Emma KEALY: I note the interjections from across the chamber from Labor members. What a surprise that Labor members are saying, ‘Oh, no, this wouldn’t be right.’ Well, it is in the legislation. If you do not believe that what I am putting forth today is right, I suggest that you support the member for Brighton’s amendments, because they will remove the limitations around retrospectivity. They will ensure that IBAC have the powers to do a full investigation of the concerns that have been very heavily covered through the media over the past year. In fact let us go into that, because I think that is an important timeline so that all Victorians can understand why we need to have an IBAC with retrospective powers. We need a corruption watchdog that has retrospective powers.

When it comes to corruption on Big Build sites we need to commend Nick McKenzie, who has done an incredible job – putting his life on the line, I am sure, in many instances – with the level of corruption that he has been able to detect in the state of Victoria, overseen by a Labor government. We look at this, and I just want to outline this, because Labor knew that there was a gap in IBAC’s powers. They knew because IBAC told former Premier Jacinta Allan directly. IBAC said it could not investigate allegations involving the Big Build. Now here we are almost two years later, and Labor is finally acting, with weeks to go until the election. Victorians have had enough of the waste and the corruption and they want change in the state of Victoria. Now Labor are acting, but they want to limit IBAC’s ability to use those strengthened powers to give any proper scrutiny to what has been happening in the state of Victoria over the past 12 years under Labor. Back in July 2024, following revelations involving the CFMEU and Big Build sites, Premier Jacinta Allan wrote to IBAC asking it to investigate. In October 2024 IBAC told Premier Allan –

John Mullahy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker: correct titles.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): I ask the member for Lowan to use correct titles.

Emma KEALY: Former Premier Jacinta Allan wrote to IBAC asking for it to investigate.

Members interjecting.

Emma KEALY: She is the former Premier. It is within the standing orders.

John Mullahy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker: correct titles – the member for Bendigo East in this chamber.

Emma KEALY: She is the former Premier. You might want to hide it like you want to hide everything else that IBAC want to investigate. But, guess what, the member for Bendigo East is the former Premier. You cannot just delete that. You cannot just put that into legislation and say –

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, she is defying your ruling.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Member for Lowan, please use correct titles for members of this place.

Emma KEALY: I think we all know who we are talking about, even if Labor want to hide their former leader in the cupboard and not have her investigated ever again.

For the next 16 months Labor did not fix the jurisdictional problem and did not publicly reveal that IBAC could not investigate that referral. On 15 February 2026, facing renewed scrutiny over alleged Big Build corruption, the member for Bendigo East publicly released –

Steve Dimopoulos: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I believe the member for Lowan is reading.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Is the member for Lowan reading?

Emma KEALY: I am referring to notes. Allan publicly released her July 2024 IBAC referral as evidence that she had acted. In February 2026 Allan was challenged in Parliament about what she did after learning that IBAC could not investigate. In September this year Labor finally brought forward laws expanding IBAC's ability to follow public money to private contractors, but they restrict the new powers from being used to revisit matters previously dealt with. This is not an isolated integrity problem. Labor's record includes red shirts using taxpayer-funded parliamentary staff for Labor's 2014 election campaign. In Operation Watts IBAC and the Ombudsman uncovered extensive misconduct involving taxpayer resources being used for Labor factional and branch-stacking activities. In Operation Daintree IBAC found that a \$1.2 million government contract was compromised by political pressure and ministerial interference. Now we have Big Build corruption allegations involving billions of dollars of Victorian taxpayers money.

Steve Dimopoulos: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is required to be factual, and we saw that her former leader was having lunch with mafia leaders and –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): That is not a point of order.

Emma KEALY: Labor knew IBAC could not follow the money because IBAC told the Premier so in October 2024. Sixteen months later Jacinta Allan, the member for Bendigo East, released the very referral she already knew IBAC could not investigate and presented it as evidence she had acted.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Member for Lowan, this is the third time you have been asked to use correct titles.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (16:31): It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to make a contribution on this incredibly important piece of legislation, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026. I do not want to say it has been a great pleasure to sit here and listen to a lot of the contributions from those opposite. To be frank, the notion of having to sit here and receive a lecture on integrity from those opposite grows tiresome pretty quickly. They have got about as much integrity as a cat at a goldfish convention. They want to come in here and sit there and lecture us on integrity. I mean, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Kew – yes, I will use correct titles – has, when it comes to this issue, no integrity herself at all. She gave that away some time ago when she argued against broadening the definition of 'corruption' within this very piece of legislation. Some months ago she came out and spoke against broadening the definition of 'corruption', which is exactly what we are doing today because we know how important it is to Victorians. I do note that she has changed her tune, the member for Kew, in respect to our position on broadening the definition of 'corruption'.

When it comes to this issue, the opposition have been all over the joint. They have not quite known what their position is. They have not quite known whether they want to broaden the definition of 'corruption'. They have not quite known how exactly they were going to oppose the bill, because they were always going to. We could write this bill 100 times and 100 times they would say no, and we could say yes to 100 amendments and 100 times they would say no, because the issue of integrity, the issue of making sure that IBAC has the powers it needs to investigate corruption and indeed the issue of a royal commission into Victoria's construction sector have nothing to do with policy, with integrity or with what is right for Victorians when it comes to the Liberal Party. The only thing that matters for them is politics. How can they try and wedge the government when it comes to an election on an issue that they think is important, and it very well should be important. Integrity should be on the table at

every single election; it should be an issue that is important at every single election. But all those opposite care about is trying to wedge the government for some sort of election campaign stunt or negative ad. That is all they care about. They do not care about what is best for Victorians. They do not care about what is best for this place. They most certainly do not care about making sure that IBAC has the appropriate powers to investigate corruption.

When the Premier took office the first action that he took was to call a royal commission into Victoria's construction sector, because we know that nothing less than a royal commission will do the work that needs to be done, the investigative work that needs to be done, to find out exactly what has happened through this sector and on some of these building sites.

I am not going to foreshadow debate, but we know that royal commissions are inquisitive by nature. We know that they are information-gathering processes. A royal commissioner cannot prosecute, obviously. To establish a special prosecutor next to that royal commission is to make sure, if necessary – I do not want to pre-empt what may be heard at the royal commission – that prosecutions can be brought in a timely and speedy manner, far faster than if that special prosecutor was not appointed. That piece of legislation is on the notice paper to be debated later in the week. The royal commission is integral. We all agree with that. The Liberal Party were calling for it for a couple of months, and then all of a sudden when we do it, it is not quite good enough. Can you imagine being such a bunch of deadbeats that your plan is to provide your own witness list to an independent inquiry? 'We need an independent royal commission, but here are the people that you've got to have in the box, Commissioner.' Honestly, no wonder the member for Mulgrave is leaving. He is a legal professional. Surely, sitting in the party room when that was being devised, he would have absolutely had his head spinning.

A member interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: Did I say Mulgrave? The member for Malvern is what I meant. The member for Mulgrave would also have a great legal mind, I am sure, if she had done the training, but I am of course talking about the member for Malvern. The gall of those opposite to try and interfere with an independent royal commission is absolutely staggering. As I said, it is pretty painful then to sit here in my seat in this place and listen to them lecture us on integrity. How about the integrity of standing up at a press conference and trying to pre-empt a witness list to a royal commission? Absolutely absurd.

As I said, this royal commission that we will undertake in this state is integral, and we know that. We have seen clearly through media reports that there has been some bad behaviour on some of these sites. None of us walk away from that, and nor should we. The powers of a royal commission are the appropriate powers to fully uncover what has perhaps transpired. I do not want to pre-empt that. But what I want to say as well is that absolutely for the most part the people, the construction workers that work on these sites, that work on these projects, are good people. They are good, hardworking Victorians that are building, frankly, state-building projects here in the state of Victoria.

The West Gate Tunnel was a project simply aimed at outer-suburban people in the western suburbs and people in Geelong. It also takes trucks off roads in those inner-western suburbs, Yarraville and Footscray – an absolutely integral project for this state, a second river crossing. As somebody who travelled from the west into Carlton every single day over the West Gate Bridge, I can tell you how welcome the West Gate Tunnel is for people in my community that do that every single day. Whether you live in Tarneit or Hoppers Crossing or Geelong or Point Cook, you now have the option to take the West Gate Tunnel into the city because of the amazing work of these thousands of construction workers that worked on that project. I am sure that 99.999 per cent of them were good, law-abiding, fantastic citizens. I am not sure exactly what happened on the West Gate Tunnel. As I said, really the only way to figure that out is to have a royal commission.

What we should not do, what we should not get trapped in and what we should not get led into is demonising construction workers in this state, who keep our state running. They build the projects that

we need, but also the economic boost and economic development that come from these projects in added productivity and also in wages are incredibly important, and that should not be lost on any of us. Like I said, integrity and transparency are at the heart of everything that this government does, and the Victorian public should expect nothing less from this government or from any government. Like I said, to sit here and take a lecture on integrity from those opposite is nothing more than laughable. This piece of legislation will give IBAC the powers that it needs to investigate corruption at its core, and I commend it to the house.

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (16:41): I rise to speak on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026. As to where the coalition stands, to be clear, we support the intent of this bill in principle. Victorians have waited years for IBAC to have the powers it needs to properly investigate corruption. IBAC itself has been saying for years that its hands were tied. Former commissioners have said it, integrity experts have said it, Transparency International has said it, and yet here we are in September 2026, weeks before an election, with a government finally scrambling to deliver what should have been done years ago. In fact we have time and again in this place moved and introduced legislation to strengthen IBAC, as they have requested, yet Labor has seen fit time and again to vote against it and vote it down.

What do they do in the closing weeks of Parliament, the second-last week of Parliament? They decide to agree to it in cabinet on a Monday and then let the opposition know about the details of it on a late Monday evening, for us to then debate it all day on a Tuesday with little to no notice. Of course we support stronger powers for IBAC. We have always supported stronger powers for IBAC. It was a Liberal government that actually introduced IBAC, this anti-corruption watchdog, to Victoria. What we cannot support, and what no reasonable member of this house should support, is a bill that gives with one hand and takes away with another.

With all of the corruption and chaos that has surrounded this government, the average Victorian could be forgiven for being confused about what this bill actually means. To put in simple terms why we are even here: Victorians will be very familiar with the \$15 billion of taxpayers money that has been lost to corruption on Big Build worksites. They will be familiar with this money lost to taxpayer-funded strippers on government worksites, money poured into illicit drug distribution rings on government worksites and money lost to criminals and gangsters on government worksites – in fact money poured into the hands of criminals, with \$15 billion being a conservative estimate from the esteemed corruption buster Geoffrey Watson SC. Every Victorian is then rightly asking, ‘Where did that \$15 billion go? Where is that \$15 billion? Why is it that this Labor government can’t find the money to properly fund our roads or fund our police or our health services but they can find \$15 billion to pour into the hands of criminals?’ There are serious questions about where that money went, and Victorians deserve answers. You would think that the obvious thing to do would be to give Victoria’s anti-corruption watchdog the power to investigate those allegations.

Steve Dimopoulos: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is required to be factual. She talks about \$15 billion that went into the hands of workers and completely misrepresented that statistic.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): That is not a point of order.

Nicole WERNER: That is not what this government is doing. Instead it is saying to the independent anti-corruption watchdog, IBAC –

Steve Dimopoulos: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I know the member wants to produce a TikTok video, but she is reading. After all these years you would think she would be able to speak without reading.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Is the member reading?

Nicole WERNER: I am referring to notes. They say to us, ‘Sure. What we will do is give you more powers to investigate corruption, but let’s exclude a whole bunch of stuff. Let’s exclude any old

corruption allegations they have dismissed, let's exclude any corruption allegations they referred elsewhere and let's exclude any corruption allegations they have finished investigating.' Do you know what this means? That this is one big cover-up from this corrupt Labor government. What can't the anti-corruption watchdog look at? Number 1, former Premier Allan's referral to IBAC – they have no powers to investigate that; and number 2, multiple referrals that we have made regarding the Big Build corruption – they have no powers to investigate that either. Before I am point-of-ordered endlessly by Labor again, the new Premier said:

I am not Daniel Andrews. I am not Jacinta Allan.

Well, sir, that may be, but you have just stitched up the biggest cover-up by designing this bill so that IBAC specifically cannot investigate the Big Build corruption –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member on her feet is required to be factual at all times, and I ask that you call her back to dealing with the facts and not making things up for, as has already been observed, her TikTok videos.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): That is not a point of order; that is a matter for debate.

Nicole WERNER: The chief anti-corruption agency calls for expanded powers for years, and what Labor decides to do is offer watered-down powers and tie IBAC's hands behind its back. That is why we have circulated an amendment in the house, which I support, proposing that this bill be redrafted to remove the limitations preventing IBAC from applying its new powers and jurisdictions to previously examined, dismissed or referred allegations, making the legislation fully retrospective; to insert a timely reporting requirement to ensure IBAC reports are provided to Parliament within a specific timeframe; to repeal section 117(1)(a) to remove the presumption that examinations be held in private; and to repeal the public interest immunity provisions that enable cabinet ministers to withhold cabinet material from IBAC.

That is our amendment. That is what I am supporting today, and I am explaining what this bill actually does, because the government would very much like Victorians not to look too closely. This bill does expand IBAC's working definition of 'corrupt conduct', which is genuinely welcome. Right now IBAC can only investigate conduct that constitutes a criminal offence punishable by five years or more in jail. This is the narrowest definition of 'corruption' used by any peak anti-corruption body in this country. Every other state and the National Anti-Corruption Commission at the federal level has a broader remit. This bill would bring Victoria into line by extending the definition to cover serious disciplinary matters and misconduct, which is what former commissioner Robert Redlich calls grey corruption. That makes sense; that is good. This bill also provides IBAC with follow-the-money powers, which would allow it to pursue investigations into major government contractors and into subcontractors and labour hire firms receiving taxpayer funds.

A member interjected.

Nicole WERNER: If the member would like to continue interrupting and interjecting, I am happy to speak louder. I will speak louder instead of having to hear these people interrupt and interject endlessly, needlessly. I am sorry that I am striking a nerve, Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): If you want to take up the interjection by the member, as is normal practice, you may do so, but there is no need to yell in response.

Nicole WERNER: But here is where the government, true to form, has stuffed it up. Hidden in this legislation is a provision that explicitly prevents IBAC from applying its new powers –

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member continues to read from a prewritten speech.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Is the member reading?

Nicole WERNER: I am referring to notes. The stitch-up is that IBAC gets new powers to investigate but not into any of the things that count to Victorians. The allegations that former Premier Allan referred to IBAC after she got exposed for her complicity in this corruption of \$15 billion – that does not count. The referrals that the Shadow Attorney-General made –

Steve Dimopoulos: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is impugning another member by alleging that she was complicit in corruption.

Nicole WERNER: She referred herself to IBAC, mate.

Steve Dimopoulos: I'm not your mate, and I never intend to be. Acting Speaker, she is implying that the member for Bendigo East, who is a current member, is somehow complicit in corruption. That is impugning a member. You should know better than that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): The member for Warrandyte will be mindful of parliamentary rules around impugning.

Nicole WERNER: That is it. This is a live demonstration of what this Labor government does to gag debate and stop genuine debate about matters that are important to Victorians. Time and again I have been interrupted and interjected by men on that side of the chamber as I have tried to stand up for Victorians and fight for them in this place. This is symptomatic of what this tired and corrupt Labor government is and looks like. They are exhausted and tired and out of touch. Again and again if they want to get up and interrupt me to stop debate and to stifle and stymie debate, so be it, but we will continue to fight for Victorians every single day. Every single day in this house, that is our duty, so we will not shy back from doing that. We will not stand back from doing that. That is our job here in this place, so I will not apologise for standing up for my community. I will not apologise for standing up for Victorians. I will not apologise or take lectures from members on that side opposite about integrity, take lectures from them and mansplaining from them about what corruption is and is not. No, we will not.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (16:51): I would like to state at the outset – and I deliberately did not take a point of order there, because I have the opportunity to speak right now – that open debate is incredibly important in this chamber. Absolutely, I concur. But it is to be conducted as per the rules and conventions of this place and the Westminster system. There are particular rules and conventions, especially in casting aspersions against other members, and it is incredibly important and it behoves all of us to conduct ourselves in this chamber with integrity as well, which means sometimes less performance and more substance. What I would like to say, further to that –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the ongoing bullying of the member for Warrandyte this afternoon has been absolutely outrageous. It is continuing. It has been bullying. You, you and you have been bullying all afternoon, and it is disgraceful.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Through the Chair, member for Brighton. I believe this is something you could take up with the Speaker, if you wish to, at a later time.

James Newbury: Thank you, Acting Speaker. I did not expect you to protect the member for Warrandyte from bullying.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): I would ask you not to place words in the Acting Speaker's mouth. I am just saying if you have an issue to raise, as is normal practice, please raise it with the Speaker.

Daniela DE MARTINO: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I take offence at the aspersion that I have been bullying the member for Warrandyte. I stood up and made a very simple contribution, acknowledged that there are rules and conventions in this place and tried to calm the situation down to a degree as well to ensure that we conduct ourselves in this chamber with a different manner, sometimes, in order to ensure that debate is productive.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): The member has left the chamber, so I cannot ask them if they would like to withdraw. Are you happy to leave that there?

Daniela DE MARTINO: I am happy to leave that there and place it on the record. I will address some of the opposition's concerns regarding retrospectivity with four key points. I do hope that some of them will listen to this: (1) if IBAC receive a new complaint or notification, they can investigate that with new powers; (2) if IBAC are yet to assess a complaint or notification they already have, they can investigate that with the new powers; (3) if IBAC get notification of new conduct related to a dismissed or referred complaint, they can investigate that with the new power; and (4) if IBAC are currently investigating something, the new powers will apply. I hope that assuages some of the concerns of those opposite.

This is an important bill that will strengthen Victoria's integrity framework and delivers on the government's commitment to ensure that our anti-corruption watchdog has the powers it needs to investigate misconduct wherever it occurs and wherever public money is involved. At its core, this bill is about public confidence, which is why it is so important to us all that this debate be conducted in a calm manner, because public confidence is everything when it comes to integrity – public confidence in our institutions; public confidence in our lawmakers; public confidence in our opposition; public confidence in this place, the legislation it creates and the conduct of all players to that part. It is absolutely fundamental to our democracy that the public have confidence in us.

We see a rise in populism at the moment, not just here in Victoria – we see it across the nation, we see it across the world. We see populism rising because public confidence is being eroded through horrific algorithms, tech bros based in Silicon Valley who seek to further their own pursuit of power and wealth by controlling us all through social media. We are watching the destruction and corrosion of our society in real time, and it is fast and it is frightening. And when we sit here and slurs are cast and the government is claimed to be corrupt, and people that are part of it are labelled corrupt by those opposite, it undermines public confidence in our institutions. We stand here today in this chamber with a piece of legislation which is going to make significant changes to IBAC, to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. We are giving it extended powers. We are broadening the definition of 'corruption'. We are doing the work to ensure there is integrity. And those opposite, still they throw shade on us, to quote the younger people. It does not do anyone any good for them to cast shade against us. It is simply so undermining, and it worries me greatly.

As I said before, at its core this bill is about public confidence, and Victorians expect that public funds are spent properly. They expect integrity in public administration. They expect transparency and accountability from those who exercise public power or benefit from public resources. And most importantly they expect that where corruption or serious misconduct is suspected, appropriate authorities have the ability to investigate thoroughly and effectively. That is what this bill actually seeks to achieve. There are two central objectives to this bill. Firstly, it enables IBAC to better follow the money by expanding its ability to investigate suspected corrupt conduct involving third parties and private subcontractors, where there is a connection to government-funded public functions. And secondly, as I mentioned before, it broadens the definition of 'corrupt conduct' to capture a wider range of conduct that undermines integrity and public confidence. Together these reforms represent a significant strengthening of Victoria's anti-corruption framework. We should all be cheering that, not deriding it.

These two reforms recognise a very simple reality: that the delivery of public services and major government projects increasingly involves a range of entities beyond traditional government departments and agencies, and our taxpayer funds – we are all taxpayers in this chamber as well, and all Victorians who pay their taxes – often flow through contractors, subcontractors, consultants and other organisations engaged to perform public functions. If we are serious about integrity and accountability, our oversight framework must reflect that reality. And I would like to actually take up the member for Tarneit's point before. I would like to be very clear about something: there are so many wonderful people working in construction and building this incredible public infrastructure that

is going to be here servicing the public for decades if not centuries to come. I have visited building sites across my electorate of Monbulk, including the Belgrave car park, the Angliss Hospital's new expansion and redevelopment and multiple schools that we have upgraded and modernised, including Emerald Secondary College, which is underway, Ghilgai Steiner School, where I just turned the sod last week, Billanook Primary, which we completed last year, and The Patch Primary as well. These are fabulous, fabulous pieces of public infrastructure that have been built by very fine people, from the architects to the project managers to the people on the tools, the sparkies, the chippies, the plumbers, all of them. I have come across so many who have acted in good faith, who have brought their skills and contributions to create wonderful lasting infrastructure for our children, for our people, for our community to enjoy.

There are fabulous people across construction, but we know that there are some elements out there who have not acted in good faith – in fact that is putting it mildly – some who have conducted themselves horrendously and have been corrupt in that conduct. They need to be held accountable for it and they need to suffer the consequences of their bad behaviour of using our taxpayer funds inappropriately to feather their own nests and to enrich themselves.

This legislation will enable IBAC to do the necessary work to uncover and reveal any and all corruption. That is fundamental to it, and that is why it is so jarring to hear those opposite with their attacks on this legislation. The attacks that have come from them have been beyond the pale.

I understand an opposition has a role to play in holding government to account. That is healthy. That is a Western democracy. That is the Westminster system, and that is fine to see, but there is a point where it goes beyond that. There is a point where it becomes farcical, and then there is a point where it can become dangerous. That is the path we are heading down now because we are feeding the populists out there. The end result will be pretty ugly for Victoria if we continue on this path, because we will see in chairs over there One Nation people, and who knows what calibre we will see with some of them coming into this place. It is a frightening thought for us all. I commend the bill to the house.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (17:01): I thank the member for Monbulk for her very considered and substantial contribution. It presented a welcome contrast to earlier contributions today. I particularly enjoyed that it was delivered at a volume that did not rupture eardrums that others may have considered as a more appropriate way of delivering their material. I am grateful for that.

This is clearly an important bill, and this is one of those rare occasions where I rise and say I accept the government's timeframe on bringing these matters to the house and I accept the government's timeframe on dealing with them. In fact I am a little bit curious about why we are not guillotining it earlier than Thursday, to be honest. I think the quicker it gets upstairs, the quicker it gets back and the quicker we all get to go home – or, in the case of some, go out and start campaigning. Nonetheless, I am supportive of the timeframe, and broadly speaking I am supportive of the bill.

I am one of the perhaps many who may have concatenated in their minds the various integrity matters that are before the Parliament and before the people of Victoria at the moment. I refer to the royal commission into the Big Build, these changes to IBAC's powers and the other bill, which I will not anticipate debate on but obviously relates to the special prosecutor. That is something that is ultimately a bill that attaches to, if you like, the royal commission. Those matters are related, in a sense, in that they are all about integrity changes. But it is important to remember that the matters we are debating in this specific bill are not the matters that are subject to the royal commission into the Big Build. They are different matters. These are prospective rules about future things that might come before the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. It is for that reason that I support this bill with one reservation, which I will get to in a moment.

For that reason I want to tease out a little bit the important distinctions between those matters that relate to the royal commission and those matters that we are dealing with under this specific legislation.

From my assessment many of the contributions made by members of the opposition particularly have focused on Big Build matters, and there is a royal commission on foot to deal with those. The letters patent have been issued. That is a real thing that is really happening, and I commend the government and I commend the Premier for doing that. Let us face it: it is why the leadership of the government changed. It was the need to have that royal commission. It was a sensible change of leadership and a sensible advance in public policy and governance in this state to have that royal commission called. I am very glad that the Premier did it. He should be congratulated for that. That is not an easy thing to do, to win the leadership of the Labor Party and to then bring about a policy change that had previously been so publicly and strongly defended. These are all good things.

These reforms are overdue, and I say that because the Integrity and Oversight Committee has spent a fair bit of time talking about the need for things like follow-the-dollar powers inside the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011, and that is what these amendments do. The follow-the-dollar powers are absolutely critical, and I am very pleased that they have come before the chamber. But you cannot talk about the follow-the-dollar powers coming before the chamber without mentioning the fine work of the member for Brunswick, because the member for Brunswick, who is too ill to be here sadly, has his DNA right in this bill with all the very, very good work he did on the Integrity and Oversight Committee and in continuing to bring pressure on the government to introduce these very necessary reforms. I congratulate him, I thank him for his work and I hope that he is doing okay.

These reforms are not just reflexive reforms relating to the politics of the day. They are reforms that are very important, reforms that go to bigger issues than just the current news cycle. It is very important, given the complexity of modern contracting arrangements, particularly on a very ambitious infrastructure program, that follow-the-dollar powers exist. They are powers that allow IBAC to look beyond the head contractors, who typically have very strong and robust governance in place. I say typically; that is not without exception. But as you work down the chain necessarily you will be in contact with organisations that may not have the same robust governance architecture, and it is against those organisations that I think there has been some evidence put into the public domain that they have been subjected to pressures to be corrupt or in fact have behaved corruptly. Whilst there is a royal commission to deal with those matters – I do not want to concatenate the two; it is very important that we understand these are separate processes – it does point to the need for IBAC to have that flexibility, because if you think about some of the IBAC successes, whether on corruption in the education department or corruption inside Casey council, quite often the matters IBAC is called upon to review or delve into are quite granular in nature. They can be in part relatively small transactions that speak to a bigger ill. It is always important that we make sure that any beneficiary of corrupt behaviour is able to be brought into the IBAC investigative network, or web if you like. These reforms do that, and for that the government ought to be congratulated.

The member for Monbulk spoke very elegantly about integrity and public confidence and how they are in fact related. It is so important that we reach a point where Victorians once again have confidence in their political system, once again have confidence in there being proper anti-corruption mechanisms and once again have confidence in the way in which public funds are spent. It is that lack of confidence that is leading to the rise of the orange peril, and I have already had plenty to say about that, Acting Speaker, as you know.

I want to talk about my principle concern with the bill, which is about the way historical matters are closed off. The bill expressly prevents IBAC from reopening a complaint that it has dismissed or referred or an investigation that it has completed. I think the government has to be a little bit careful. Quite necessarily you need to give certainty on these matters, and IBAC needs to be able to say they have closed the book on matters where in fact they have closed the book having investigated. But there may be circumstances where they closed the book because they did not have the powers of investigation – for example, they did not have follow-the-dollar powers – or where they did not have enough evidence at the time but they would happily look at it again. I appreciate that there is a

mechanism in the bill, but I just query whether there is not a way of making it clearer or easier to get a matter reopened, if you like, where there is a genuine basis to do so. That could be on the basis of the powers changing and the ability of IBAC to investigate changes – that is a genuine basis upon which to reopen investigation, I would suggest – or of course new evidence.

I am very grateful for the briefings that we have had. The Premier's office has advised that genuinely new evidence does give a basis for investigation. That is welcome, but I think there is an opportunity for the government to expand in this debate on exactly how that mechanism will operate – what constitutes new evidence, whether it may relate to conduct that has previously been examined and whether IBAC itself decides whether the threshold has been met. It is very important that a closed file does not become some kind of immunity certificate – that once IBAC has closed the book on something that that simply says we are just never going to crack it open again, even in circumstances where it might be warranted.

Perhaps with the benefit of hindsight the government may very well have brought a bill to the house that had the ability for IBAC to crack something open if there was a genuine or reasonable basis to do so rather than having this very narrowly drafted close-out provision, because that close-out provision might restrict IBAC from looking at matters that it perhaps ought to look at, particularly if they are matters that simply go to, for example, the follow-the-dollar powers. IBAC may very well say, 'Well, we closed the book on level 1 of the allegation because we simply couldn't look at levels 2, 3 and 4 as the money went down the line.' You might say that IBAC, on that basis, would say, 'Now that we've got the powers to do it, we should take a look at it.' I do not say that they emphatically are, but they might well be restricted by that close-out provision. I would hope that the government looks positively at potential amendments in the other place or this place to ensure that this does not unnecessarily restrict IBAC's activity going forward.

Once again, I find myself bereft of time with much more to say – probably true of my career as much as it is of this speech. However, my final point to make is that with expanded responsibilities comes the need for expanded resources, and I hope that the government takes the opportunity to signal publicly very quickly that the resources will follow to ensure that IBAC's new powers and broader responsibilities can be met with the resources it needs to do the very important work it has to do to improve confidence in all of the government of Victoria.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (17:11): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026. I was going to commence by saying that it has been a slightly unedifying debate that I have been privy to, but the member for Ringwood and indeed the member for Monbulk's contributions I thought lifted the tone and injected some substance back into the debate rather than relying upon volume and performative theatrics for TikTok clicks.

I want to return to some of the points the member for Ringwood made in his contribution, and to use his phrase, he successfully avoided concatenating the issue of the Royal Commission into the Integrity of Major Public and Civil Infrastructure Construction Projects in Victoria and the IBAC bill that is on the table. These are both very important issues, but they are distinct, although complementary, and in disaggregating those two issues I think the member for Ringwood did a service in his contribution to this debate.

The Premier, upon his election, made very clear that his first priority of government was to ensure a royal commission into the construction sector. That is underway with the appointments this week in fact of senior silks to the royal commission to assist the commissioner, a former Chief Justice of South Australia, to fully investigate the issues which have been prevalent in the construction sector. As others have said, that does not mean that every actor, every employee or every worker in that sector is somehow guilty of corrupt conduct. Nonetheless every single dollar that is expended upon public works in this state matters, the value of that money matters, and it is important that Victorians have confidence in the expenditure of that money. It is important that the royal commission is able to do its work without, I would contend, being jawboned by the Shadow Attorney-General, who I note has not

been appointed to assist the royal commission and is not a senior silk. It is the work of the royal commission to investigate, it is the work of the royal commissioner to invite witnesses to appear, and I look forward to that body commencing its important work.

The IBAC bill on the table also goes to one of the Premier's significant priorities that he articulated upon his election. I also note, just in passing, that one of the other first steps that the Premier took when he was elected was to introduce workplace protection orders, which have now been legislated by this place and the Council and will keep retail workers safe. But the Premier also, as I say, committed to strengthening the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, IBAC. I do note that the Leader of the Opposition and those opposite have previously sought to limit that broad-based capacity of IBAC, so 'INAC' perhaps would be a better term for their conception of an anti-corruption body.

These anti-corruption bodies have a long history in this state. 1973 saw the establishment of the Victorian Ombudsman, which was the first major independent mechanism for investigating both maladministration and complaints about government in this state. It has performed a really important role in the over half-century since, demonstrating the need for independent oversight of ministers and departments. There are bodies within this place which do also do that – the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and other bodies – but I think having that external mechanism is important for maintaining the kind of confidence that the member for Monbulk talked about in her contribution – that it is important to sustain public confidence in institutions. At a time when that confidence is fraying on a global level, having strong, robust, independent institutions to hold ministers, hold departments and hold the expenditure of public money to account is important for the fabric of democracy.

We have seen what can happen when those independent bodies are marginalised. The Kennett government of 1992 to 1999 in this state involved fairly substantial reforms to the public sector and centralised political control. In 1997 the Auditor-General Ches Baragwanath raised concerns about corruption and accountability, particularly in the ambulance services, partly as a consequence of some of that centralisation. And the government's subsequent attempts to alter the Auditor-General's powers created some very significant challenges, I think, for that government, as exemplified by the 1999 election result, but also for public administration in this state. In 2004 the Bracks government established the Office of Police Integrity to investigate police corruption and serious misconduct. This initially focused on, as I say, police corruption and Victoria Police rather than corruption across the whole of the public realm. But in the run-up to the 2010 election the Brumby Labor government committed to establishing an anti-corruption commission, which was then legislated by the Baillieu government in 2011. But I note that there were challenges through that government in terms of its engagement with IBAC and the OPI, with an adviser in the then police minister's office being dismissed for seeking to bring down the police commissioner at the time and a former member for Kew resigning their commission for leaking Privileges Committee deliberations.

But I return to the bill that we have before us on the table, which reflects the Premier's very strong commitment that public funds must be subject to strong independent scrutiny. This bill helps to do that, because it strengthens IBAC's ability to investigate exactly how government money is used, including where it passes through the hands of private contractors. These are obviously integral for any substantial construction project or any significant body of public works. So these follow-the-money powers are important, and this bill reflects that the current law is too narrow. IBAC currently needs to meet a relatively restrictive criminal threshold before it can investigate, which can, as a consequence, leave some challenging and potentially serious misconduct outside of IBAC's reach. As a consequence, poor governance and indeed systemic failures may go unexamined if they do not amount to a specified offence. So this bill's expansion of the threshold to include any criminal offence, rather than only specified offences, I think will help to strengthen Victorians' confidence in the kinds of independent and robust entities like the Ombudsman and indeed like IBAC, which have been set up exactly for that purpose.

Follow-the-money provisions are important because in the nature of modern government not every element of public money is expended by departments and contractors are involved in a very significant amount of the delivery of public services. I think it is important that all of those are encompassed by the powers of IBAC to ensure that there is probity, to ensure that there is the kind of integrity that the Premier has repeatedly stated is entirely non-negotiable in Victoria. Public money should not become harder to scrutinise just because it is channelled through a private entity. It remains public money. It remains fundamentally subject to the oversight of this place because it is there in the budget papers, it is allocated in the budget, it is subject to democratic oversight and it is there to improve the public realm and to improve public services. Therefore it is important that public bodies or bodies within the public realm which are charged with overseeing government and government expenditure, like IBAC, have the capacity to thoroughly investigate the expenditure, the acquittal of that money, even if it passes through private organisations.

This is part of a larger reform program. As I said at the outset and as the member for Ringwood has said, there is a royal commission underway, for which letters patent have been issued and for which a commissioner has been appointed – a former Chief Justice of South Australia – who has now appointed very senior silks to assist him. That work is important, that work needs to happen and that work will happen. I think it is important that the IBAC bill, which has much broader prospective implications and operational considerations, is allowed to be debated in this place without it curtailing the work of the royal commission or the royal commissioner.

The bottom line is that government contracts should not create accountability loopholes. This bill helps to close that type of loophole, and serious misconduct should not escape investigation because of an outdated legal definition. Every single dollar that is spent on behalf of the people of Victoria by this place matters. Ensuring that people retain confidence in that expenditure and in their public institutions matters. It will be on the ballot paper at this November election. I hope that democracy has a rich future in Victoria. I commend the bill to the house.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (17:21): A leopard does not change its spots, and we see a new Premier that is really part of the same old regime. This new Premier claims to be all about integrity, but unfortunately what we have seen already is the Premier being very selective when it comes to integrity. We have seen the issue already about a number of secret hidden taxes that have just been discovered. For those that have been using their Myki, an additional 1 per cent that was hidden has been discovered, and of course everyone is paying for the Suburban Rail Loop. The Suburban Rail Loop is part of the Big Build that the government claimed to be the big hero opportunity. How many times did we see former premiers stand with a hard hat cutting a ribbon and saying ‘How good is this?’ in terms of jobs and in terms of the economy? It was the big-ticket item – it certainly was in terms of money – that had former premiers standing alongside saying, ‘We’re getting Victoria moving.’ Well, what a con job that has been, \$15 billion of corruption that we know of in terms of what has been already alleged – some say more – and a government that has been talking this up like it has been fantastic.

We know that the current Premier did not think we needed a royal commission. The current Premier, when he was the Deputy Premier, did not think we needed strengthened IBAC powers. In fact the opposition time and time again called out the stuff that was being discovered on the Big Build sites – the big, dirty, rotten Big Build sites. Nick McKenzie, the investigative reporter, held the government to account for the corruption and the horrific scenarios where women were exploited on Big Build sites and for Women in Construction, who were awarded contracts that were going to people that were involved in bikie gangs and strip clubs and all kinds of things. These were the kinds of contracts that were being awarded. This is what has been discovered. All along, when we kept asking the government of the day, the then Premier, the member for Bendigo East, and the Deputy Premier, the current Premier, claimed we did not need strengthened IBAC powers, we did not need a royal commission, police were doing their job and IBAC had enough powers. All of a sudden we get a new Premier and the new Premier says, ‘I have now found my integrity that I did not have for years, and we’re going

to have a royal commission.' In fact the Premier stood up and said, 'We're going to have a royal commission.' It was the first thing that was announced. It took weeks for us to see anything or hear anything. It was kicked down the road longer and longer until finally we have got the bill before the house now. You would think with the time the Premier had that they would actually get going if this was the most significant thing that the Premier was going to do to clean up the corruption that had been made by the very government and people that this now Premier was involved with and responsible for. It is not like the current Premier did not have a seat at the table. The current Premier was the Deputy Premier. The current Premier had every opportunity to do this for years, but the current Premier all of a sudden has found his voice now that he is the Premier. In the meantime, Victorians have been ripped off.

Where is the \$15 billion? Are we going to get our \$15 billion back? We have finally got a bill before this house that we will support because we need IBAC to have strengthened powers, and we will do whatever we can to ensure IBAC has the strengthened powers to investigate, to clean up the corruption and to get taxpayers \$15 billion back. But it still does not go far enough. The member for Brighton, the Shadow Attorney-General, has put forward a number of proposed changes to not have more delays and to ensure those that have been involved in the corruption can be held to account. Former Premier Allan, the member for Bendigo East, was referred previously to IBAC. Does that mean the member for Bendigo East does not get the opportunity to front IBAC under strengthened powers or to front the royal commission? They are the kinds of things that we are proposing to be changed – those that have fronted where IBAC have said, 'Nothing to be seen here.' When the changes have been made, we do not want those former ministers and former premiers to get a get-out-of-jail-free card because the government have wiggled their way and managed to set things up to ensure they run a protection racket. We do not want to see a protection racket by the Carroll Labor government. We do not want to see that happen, because we have had a protection racket for 12 years in Victoria. This is the most corrupt government that Victoria has seen. Victorians are sick and tired of the corruption from now three premiers in this state. Three premiers in 12 years have presided over the worst corruption that Victoria has seen.

Finally, a couple of months before the election, we have a Premier turn around and say, 'I've found my integrity. I've found it. I'm going to have an IBAC,' although it is substandard. To give follow-the-money powers that are needed and to ensure that those that have been referred to IBAC before do not have a protection racket so they cannot be referred again and to ensure that there is a speedy process in all of this is what we are suggesting with these amendments. If this government is serious about really cleaning up the corruption in this state, this government should support the Shadow Attorney-General's amendments. This will be another test for the government. Do they really have integrity? Does the Premier really believe that he has integrity, or is it just another talking point? Is it just another lot of spin? I think Victorians have woken up. No-one believes a thing this government says anymore. We see that. You only have to doorknock the seats of many of those opposite to get an understanding of what people actually think about the worst, most corrupt government that they have ever seen. Could you trust the people who created the corruption to fix the corruption? You are asking this government to mark its own homework. Of course they are going to give themselves an A-plus.

We need to clean up corruption in this state. It is like a business that has been run by a group of dodgy directors. You would never invest in that business. People are not investing in Victoria, because there is no confidence in Victoria. There is no confidence in Victoria, because we have the most corrupt government that this state has ever seen, and we have to clean up the mess. We need a royal commission. We need IBAC. We need to ensure that those that have created the corruption, that have been involved in this, are held fully to account and face the full force of the law. If brown paper bags have been traded between those that had power, then those people need to be held responsible. We do not need protection rackets. We do not need con jobs by the current government to say, 'We're doing all of these wonderful things, but we'll protect those people that are former ministers and former premiers from going before IBAC or going before the royal commission.' That is not integrity. If this Premier was worth anything, we would actually see that happen. Unfortunately, what we have is a

selective Premier that only uses integrity when it suits but when it counts is a mile away from it. We have seen it already. This Premier sat around the cabinet table when there was the secret tax to fund the Suburban Rail Loop. The Premier was the former transport minister and now claims he knew nothing about it. You cannot have selective memory and then also claim that you have integrity. We saw that happen under the hotel quarantine inquiry, where former Premier Andrews could not recall. We are seeing it play out again under current Premier Carroll, who also said he was not at the table.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Mercurio): Please use correct titles for sitting members.

David SOUTHWICK: We have got a current Premier. We have got a former Premier. We have got former premiers. The three of them are all as bad as one another. This is not a new dawn, this is not a new regime; this is just a Sergeant Schultz that says, 'I know nothing. I had nothing to do with it. I wasn't there.' That is a whole lot of rubbish of course. A Deputy Premier claiming that he was not responsible for all of the bad decisions by the previous premiers is just an absolute untruth. It is a lie. This Premier needs to actually fess up and own up to the mess. He cannot blame others for his own mess. He cannot turn around and say, 'I'm a new regime. I wasn't at the table.' We are not bringing in a Premier that was out of this place. This Premier sat around the table, was the Deputy Premier, was a minister, and this Premier should go and should actually start doing something.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (17:31): There we have it, the lecture from Mr Integrity himself, the guy that calls himself the adjunct professor, going around and waving a fake CV, coming in here and lecturing us about integrity – the guy that tape-records his own colleagues in secret partyroom meetings, which we know has been exposed and come out for all to see, wearing a wire in partyroom meetings.

Brad Rowswell: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the assertions that the member for Pascoe Vale is making must only be made via a substantive motion in accordance with the standing orders.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Mercurio): I do not uphold the point of order.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I took offence from the member for Pascoe Vale and ask him to withdraw and apologise.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Mercurio): I ask the member for Pascoe Vale to withdraw.

Anthony CIANFLONE: I withdraw. The truth hurts, because a fact is a fact. The Liberal Party and Liberal members opposite have absolutely no credibility when it comes to talking about integrity. They need to look in the mirror, look at their own actions and look at the comprehensive reporting across the *Herald Sun* and 3AW – their favourite media news outlets – in terms of their own conduct and the fact that they have been suing each other as a party. They have been suing each other and taking each other to court. Six leaders in seven –

David Southwick interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Mercurio): Before I hear the point of order, member for Caulfield, were you talking at the member for Pascoe Vale? Your back was to me. I thought I could hear you. I find that somewhat disrespectful.

Brad Rowswell: On a point of order, Acting Speaker: relevance.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Mercurio): I do not uphold the point of order.

Anthony CIANFLONE: As I say, this is a bill about integrity. It is all about integrity. Those opposite want to throw punches, but they cannot take anything back.

In saying all that, I turn, obviously, to the substance of the bill, which is the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026. It is a bill that is fundamental to our democracy because it is all about trust – trust that public money is spent for the public good; trust that people exercising public power do so honestly; trust that government contractors, unions and businesses and

anybody else entrusted with taxpayers money are subject to proper scrutiny; and trust that when wrongdoing is alleged, our institutions have the powers to follow the evidence, follow the conduct and, critically, follow the money. No government, no political party and no institution should ever regard integrity reform as a destination at which we just simply arrive and remain. Integrity must continually be strengthened as governments change, technology changes, contracting models change and the methods used by those who seek to exploit public systems also change. When shortcomings are identified, governments and we all have a responsibility to act.

The word ‘integrity’ comes from the Latin word ‘integritas’, meaning ‘wholeness, soundness, something intact and uncorrupted’, and that is what an integrity system must do to protect the wholeness of our democracy and the trust that all Victorians place in it. In saying that, though, I do want to acknowledge that, by and large, the benefits of a lot of our major infrastructure Big Build projects have been overwhelmingly and remain overwhelmingly positive. The economic, the employment, the socio-economic and the skills outcomes and the long-term benefits for our whole state, city and communities will stand the test of time. And the workers delivering each and every one of those projects by and large are good people – construction workers, architects, planners, engineers; everyone involved in a lot of these big projects – and are good-intentioned people who have been doing the right thing. So I just want to make it clear on the record that many of those workers, a lot of whom live in my community, have done a magnificent job.

But this bill of course does not emerge from a vacuum, because we have confronted, as a state, serious allegations over recent years about the conduct within those government-funded construction projects. I have doorknocked and spoken to many residents as well who have raised this with me and their concerns. And most recently, the wideranging allegations that have been made concerning organised crime figures, outlaw motorcycle gangs, underworld figures allegedly infiltrating parts of the construction industry, alleged misuse or wastage of public money, intimidation, violence and manipulation of contracting, subcontracting, labour hire and industrial arrangements are unacceptable. These allegations are unacceptable, and we should not stand for them. They must be properly investigated, and they should not be predetermined by politicians in this chamber. That is precisely why the government has established, the Premier has established, the Royal Commission into the Integrity of Major Public and Civil Infrastructure Construction Projects in Victoria, with the Honourable Christopher Kourakis AC as commissioner. Its terms of reference are broad and provide the commission with all the powers and resources that it will need to speak to and investigate however and whoever it needs to. Along with the royal commission we are also establishing Victoria’s first office of the special prosecutor, because the royal commission of course can uncover wrongdoing but does need to prosecute people in real time, which the special prosecutor will help support. And if we are serious about following the evidence, IBAC must also be allowed to follow the money.

This bill, again, has not evolved from a vacuum. It is off the back of also the 2023 Parliamentary Integrity and Oversight Committee inquiry into the adequacy of the legislative framework for IBAC. The committee report was a very comprehensive piece of work that made 31 recommendations, 29 directed to government and two to IBAC. The government has supported 21 of the 29 recommendations directed to government in principle, with a further eight that are under review. And we have also established an expert reference group involving IBAC, the Victorian Ombudsman, Integrity Oversight Victoria and Victoria Police to work through the legal and operational consequences of the broader package. This is not avoiding reform; this is ensuring that we have reform of a complex integrity system involving multiple independent agencies, coercive powers, criminal investigations, procedural fairness and people’s legal rights and that we make sure we get it right.

There are reforms that can and should happen right now, and that is exactly what this bill does. The first major reform is straightforward in principle but enormously significant in practice: IBAC will be empowered to follow the money. Modern governments do not operate solely through traditional departments staffed exclusively by public servants. Billions of dollars of public work undertaken through corporations, consortia, head contractors, subcontractors and complex supply chains occurs

very regularly, yet the integrity framework has not always kept pace with that reality. Under this bill the definition of ‘public body’ and ‘public officer’ will be expanded to capture relevant associated entities, drawing upon concepts already used under Victoria’s Audit Act 1994. This will enable IBAC to investigate suspected corrupt conduct by third parties and private subcontractors where there is a connection between the conduct and the performance of a publicly funded public function. In simple terms, public money should carry public accountability with it. A taxpayer dollar should not lose the protection of Victoria’s integrity system simply because it has travelled from a department to a contractor, from a contractor to a subcontractor or further down the increasingly complex supply chain. And where public money goes, appropriate integrity oversight must be capable of following.

The second major reform is equally as important. At present, before conduct can constitute corrupt conduct for the purposes of an IBAC investigation it must satisfy particular statutory requirements and also constitute what the legislation calls a relevant offence. That is a narrow category – principally indictable offences and specified common-law offences. But the problem is obvious: there can be conduct that seriously compromises integrity and warrants investigation without neatly satisfying that existing threshold. The bill before us removes that narrow ‘relevant offence’ requirement. Instead the definition will capture conduct that would constitute any offence or any serious disciplinary matter. A serious disciplinary matter can include serious misconduct capable of justifying termination or significant employment or contractual penalty and serious contraventions of applicable codes of conduct governing MPs, ministers, parliamentary secretaries and councillors. It means IBAC can look beyond the narrow question of whether conduct fits within the limiting category of criminal offences and examine a broader range of serious integrity-compromising behaviour. That is a substantial expansion of IBAC’s jurisdiction.

Labor has a long record in this space that we should not ignore but that we should be proud of. Gough Whitlam went to the 1972 election promising an ombudsman and freedom-of-information legislation, arguing against excessive secrecy in government. The Hawke government established the National Crime Authority in 1984, giving Australia a standing national body with special powers to confront sophisticated organised crime. A lot of that came off the back of the old ‘bottom of the harbour’ scandal. Here in Victoria the Cain Labor government’s Freedom of Information Act 1982 was one of the defining transparency reforms of its era, leading the way. The Albanese federal Labor government has introduced national anti-corruption legislation. Here in Victoria we have reformed donation laws and today through this bill and with the previous reforms we have made through the labour hire reform we continue to make strides in better integrity, better transparency and better governance for people.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (17:41): I am pleased – I will use that adjective – to rise to speak on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026. It has been a long time coming. As the member for Warrandyte and I think most members on this side of the house have stated, we support the intent of this bill but we do not support what looks to be the secrecy or the sneakiness of the retrospective elements of this bill, which is why the member for Brighton has circulated amendments that will make the bill fully retrospective and remove the limitations in the bill as it is now. They will also insert timely reporting requirements for reports to stop the Operation Richmond-style delays that we saw.

The issues surrounding IBAC are something that I am intimately familiar with, having been a member of Parliament’s Integrity and Oversight Committee for the past four years. I heard the extensive evidence that was given about the limits of IBAC’s framework when we had the inquiry into the adequacy of the legislative framework for the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. It was stated in that inquiry that IBAC did not have follow-the-money powers and that the threshold for corrupt conduct was far too high. That has been addressed. We have also presented various private members bills to correct this, which of course Labor voted down, during the course of the last four years. There were 31 recommendations made in that report, some of which IBAC were to address themselves and some of which were for the government. Like I said, I heard extensive evidence about the limits of IBAC’s framework, but the message was clear that corruption in government contracting

has evolved, the law has not kept up and IBAC have been forced to watch on and watch conduct that fails every community test imaginable as far as integrity goes fall outside of their reach because it does not amount to that serious criminal offence.

Public integrity is not merely the absence of a conviction; it is a faithful exercise of public power for public purpose. This bill finally responds to that reality. It removes that narrow concept of a relevant offence and expands corrupt conduct to include conduct that would constitute any offence or a serious disciplinary matter. That does include serious misconduct, conduct capable of justifying termination or a significant sanction and serious breaches of the codes applying to members of Parliament, ministers, parliamentary secretaries and councillors. These changes, like I said, have been a long time coming, but we are here now. But let us not sanitise the history that forced the Labor government to bring them here. They have been forced. They have been dragged here kicking and screaming to address this issue.

I have watched this debate this afternoon in this place, and when we start talking about the investigations and what has been uncovered by Nick McKenzie and his colleagues at the *Age*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Financial Review* and *60 Minutes* in the Big Build investigation – and then there is Geoffrey Watson – there are countless interjections and points of order because those on the other side clearly do not like to hear about that. They do not like us talking about that in this place. Some of those points of order were about us being factual. Well, let us be factual: the timeline that has dragged the Labor government here, kicking and screaming, is devastating. Geoffrey Watson SC's report says that the Victorian CFMEU's decline accelerated when Labor's Big Build ramped up in 2015 – 11 years ago. His conclusion was that the enormous pool of public money – 'Where is the \$15 billion?' is what people are saying, and every day I hear that – created the opportunity and the temptation. That was the beginning of a decade in which billions flowed into major projects and into the pockets of bikies and organised crime, while those charged with protecting taxpayers failed to ensure that integrity kept pace with that expenditure in being able to follow the money, although they were asked about it multiple times, both by those on this side of the house and by IBAC itself in inquiries and such.

By June 2023, according to documents that were later exposed by investigative reporting, as I mentioned, senior public servants had briefed the then transport infrastructure minister, the current member for Bendigo East, the former Premier, about alleged criminal and bkie infiltration of the Big Build. The warning was reportedly travelling right through the heart of the government. Then in July 2024 Nick McKenzie and his colleagues at the *Age*, as I mentioned before, and *60 Minutes*, published the 'Building bad' investigation, and that investigation has continued. To be fair, investigative journalism is not something we see as often as we used to. Coming from a media background, investigative journalism used to be something that journos loved to get their teeth into, but in the digital age it seems to be a fight for the first tweet, to break the news first. Investigative long-form journalism has subsided, I suppose, but this continues to be investigated. They reported on allegations of underworld figures, including outlaw motorcycle gang members, being installed in lucrative union and site roles, intimidation of contractors and union pressure concerning which subcontractors and labour hire firms could work on taxpayer-funded projects.

John Setka resigned immediately before the investigation was published, within days of the Victorian branch moving towards administration. The former Premier wrote to IBAC in July 2024, but the very laws that Labor had refused to strengthen meant that IBAC could not follow the public money through the unions, the contractors and the subcontractors. By October 2024 the Premier's office knew the referral had been rejected for want of jurisdiction. IBAC informed the Premier and the government then that it was out of their jurisdiction, so they had to watch on. There was no urgent bill. There was no royal commission. In fact we asked time and time again to introduce a private members bill and if the Premier was going to establish a royal commission. Repeatedly the answer was no, and there were no immediate follow-the-money powers either. That was October two years ago, and the government

kept pointing to referrals while knowing the principal integrity agency could not act – but they had referred it, knowing full well that they could not do anything about it. It had been referred.

That does not pass the pub test at all, and the public know this. This bill not being retrospective and all of the limitations contained within it again illustrate how much this Labor government – whether it is Andrews, whether it is the Allan Labor government, whether it is the Carroll Labor government – take Victorians for fools, thinking that this was not going to be pointed out and thinking that this is okay. It simply is not. Everyone is asking, ‘Where’s the \$15 billion?’ They just want answers. They want transparency.

Taxpayers want accountability for those dollars that have been funnelled into the pockets of bikies and organised crime on Big Build sites, but it is not just Big Build. I know there has been a lot of concentration around the alleged corruption on Big Build sites, but if we have a look at it – and I made some notes earlier about the different operations that have taken place over the last few years – Operation Daintree is another one that comes to mind, and Operation Watts, and Operation Richmond of course, which took years and years. This bill as it stands at the moment does not address the timeliness and the importance of timeliness with regard to IBAC investigations. The amendments that the member for Brighton has provided do, as they should, because that is what the Victorian taxpayer deserves. They deserve nothing less than transparency and integrity in government and accountability as to where their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent. The member for Monbulk pointed out that the lack of confidence is due to the algorithms. No, it is not. It is due to a corrupt government not being transparent, not having any integrity and not being accountable to anyone.

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (17:51): I rise to speak in support of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026, a bill about something fundamental to our democracy: trust – trust that government is acting in the interests of the people it represents, trust that public institutions are working as they should, trust that the taxes Victorians work hard to pay for are being used responsibly and for the purposes they were intended and trust that when something goes wrong there are strong and independent institutions capable of uncovering it and holding people to account. We should never take that trust for granted, because across the world we are seeing what happens when trust in governments and in public institutions begins to break down. People become cynical about whether government can make their lives better. They disengage from our democratic institutions and from each other. People who already feel left behind can become even more disconnected, and mistrust creates fertile ground for misinformation, conspiracy theories and those who seek to exploit division rather than solve problems.

That should concern every one of us in this place, every one of us who has been tasked with upholding our democracy and our institutions of government, because a strong state is not simply one that can build things or pass laws. A strong state is one where people have confidence in their institutions, where they believe government listens to them and that decisions are made fairly, where there are rules and standards that apply to everyone and where they can see that their hard-earned tax dollars are being used on the things that matter, like delivering the services and opportunities people need to thrive. That trust has to be earned, and when the community tell us that they expect more from their government, we have to listen.

Our new Premier has listened. He has been clear that Victorians want change, and he has been equally clear that integrity is an essential part of that change. On his first day as Premier he said that under our government integrity would not be optional, and he backed those words with action. His first action was to call a royal commission into Victoria’s construction industry. The government is establishing an office of the special prosecutor to work alongside it, and the Premier committed to strengthening IBAC with the power to follow the money, not at some distant point in the future but in this term. This bill delivers on that commitment.

We believe leadership is about listening to what people expect of us, recognising when change is needed and then being prepared to act. Victorians expect integrity from their government, they expect

accountability and they expect us to take seriously any allegation that their money has been misused. This government does. The allegations of misconduct and corruption on government-funded construction projects are serious. They deserve proper investigation. Victorians deserve the truth about what happened, and where wrongdoing has occurred they rightly expect consequences. That scrutiny cannot be selective. No individual organisation or institution should be beyond it. That is the approach this Premier has taken. The royal commission's terms of reference extend not only to unions, construction companies, labour hire firms, consortia and criminal actors but to the role of government itself, including departments and delivery agencies. It is independent. It can go where the evidence leads, and alongside it the office of the special prosecutor is being established because uncovering wrongdoing is only part of the job. Where wrongdoing is established, people should face consequences, and through the legislation before us today we are also strengthening the independent integrity body that will remain long after the royal commission has completed its work.

The central reform in this bill is straightforward: IBAC needs to be able to follow public money where it goes. The way government delivers major projects and services today can involve complicated relationships between government agencies, construction companies, consortia, contractors, subcontractors, labour hire firms and suppliers. Public accountability should not disappear simply because public money moves from government into the hands of a private entity. The existing IBAC act already allows IBAC to investigate certain contractors performing public functions, but IBAC has identified uncertainty about how far that jurisdiction extends. The bill addresses that gap. It expands IBAC's jurisdiction to associated entities, allowing it to investigate suspected corrupt conduct by third parties and private contractors where the conduct is connected to government funding and the performance of a public function. Put simply, where the money goes accountability should follow. I think that principle will make sense to every Victorian, because we should never lose sight of what public money actually represents. In my community I advocate every day for investment in the things that make people's lives better: better schools and opportunities for our kids; hospitals and health services that people can access when they need them; better women's health services so women and girls are listened to and can get the care they deserve; mental health and wellbeing to support our communities; and the infrastructure and services that allow people to live good, secure lives. These are not abstract numbers on a balance sheet. They are nurses and doctors caring for people and teachers giving our kids the best start in life. That is what public investment is for. It is about giving people the services and opportunities they need to live well.

Labor believes government has a responsibility to invest in people. We do not take the view, as those opposite do, that come what may you are largely on your own and that public investment is a problem. I speak to many people in my community who do not think that way and who think that things like free kinder and dental care are part of the fabric of a healthy society. Precisely because we believe in public investment we have an absolute responsibility to protect it. Every dollar misused is a dollar that cannot be put towards a school, a hospital or a train service – all the things that our communities depend on. Integrity and service delivery are not separate conversations, they go hand in hand. People should be able to trust that their money is being protected and they should be able to trust that their government is using it to deliver for them.

Importantly, this bill is designed to make those new powers practical. It does not simply say that an organisation becomes subject to IBAC because it has received some form of public funding. There must be a connection between the alleged corrupt conduct and the expenditure or use of public money, a publicly funded project or a function or undertaking, and that matters. It gives IBAC the reach it needs while maintaining a clear connection to the public functions and public funds that justify that scrutiny. Importantly, IBAC will continue to be required to prioritise serious or systemic corrupt conduct. This is not about sending every workplace matter to our anti-corruption commission, it is about removing barriers that can prevent IBAC from properly examining serious wrongdoing. The definition of 'corrupt conduct' will therefore be expanded to enable IBAC to investigate conduct that would constitute either an offence or a serious disciplinary matter, such as conduct that would warrant the termination of employment.

IBAC strongly supports the key reforms and has been closely involved in their development. Integrity Oversight Victoria also supports the reforms, and feedback from those bodies has shaped important elements of the bill. Importantly, this bill is not the final word on reform. The Integrity and Oversight Committee made 31 recommendations through its inquiry, 29 of them directed to government, and government has supported, in principle, 21 of those. Some can and should be acted on now. Others raise broader questions about investigative powers, transparency, evidence, public interest disclosures, information sharing and the way our integrity agencies interact with each other. Those questions deserve proper consideration. That is why the government has established an expert reference group involving our integrity and law enforcement agencies, with advice due next year and a second tranche of reforms to follow.

I think there is also an important principle to point out here: these are very significant expanded powers we are bestowing on IBAC. Just as we expect fairness and integrity in government, we also expect IBAC to carry out its functions with care and procedural fairness, especially given the far-reaching consequences for individuals where allegations are made but subsequently not substantiated. We are acting now to give IBAC the power to follow public money. We are strengthening its capacity to investigate serious wrongdoing. We are making those powers meaningful.

The SPEAKER: The time has come for me to interrupt business in accordance with the resolution of the house today for the members for Croydon and Rowville to make their valedictory statements. I will relax the prohibition against applause in the chamber following each valedictory statement, but I remind members to refrain from hugs or handshakes within the chamber, and no photography.

Members

Member for Croydon

Valedictory statement

David HODGETT (Croydon) (18:00): Today I rise to make my valedictory speech. I had lunch recently with Wade Noonan, and he quickly reminded me of the words of Theo Theophanous, who said, ‘You only get applauded twice in this place – the day you arrive and the day you leave.’ I will do my best to summarise 20 years of parliamentary service in the next 15 minutes. When I thought about many of the stories I could tell tonight, they would need to be told under parliamentary privilege. But I also thought, ‘I don’t think we want some of these stories etched into *Hansard* for eternity,’ so I think I will refrain from a lot of stories and just leave it to a lot of thank-yous.

Leaving this place is not an easy decision. Public service has been one of the greatest privileges of my life, and representing the people of my electorate has been an honour beyond measure. Whilst much of my life has been about public service, politics was not the end goal for me. I had always had a deep interest in local government, and following the local government amalgamation, as the commissioners were handing control back to democratically elected councillors, I decided to run. I was not a member of a political party. In fact I ran as an independent candidate against Liberal, Labor and Greens and won. I did three terms on council and was elected three times as mayor by my colleagues. I served with my good friend James Merlino. I recall one time when I was mayor, James politely asked what I had on for the weekend. I did not have a lot on, so he asked if I wanted to come to a seminar on the health system, to which I enthusiastically agreed. I met James on the Sunday afternoon at a hall in Mount Evelyn, walked in and sat towards the back of the hall. Before long, John Thwaites stood up and started presenting, and as I looked around the room at a lot of older people, I thought to myself, ‘Shit, this is a Labor Party function’ – sorry, Speaker. I looked around and thought to myself, ‘Goodness me, this is a Labor Party function.’ John Thwaites was the Shadow Minister for Health at the time, and while it was an interesting afternoon I was not about to join the Labor Party. James and Heather McTaggart continue to joke about it to this day, saying they almost got me, but not so.

I really enjoyed my time in local government and have enormous respect for the councillors and staff in my area. Being in local government, I started working with state and federal MPs on local issues. I

was aware of where my values aligned, joined the Liberal Party, and as they say, the rest is history. When I first sought election, I did so with a simple belief that our community deserved strong representation, practical solutions and representatives who listen more than they speak. Like many who arrive in this Parliament, I was driven by a desire to make a positive difference and leave Victoria better than I found it. And today, as I look around this chamber, I am reminded that while politics is often viewed through the lens of conflict and disagreement, its true purpose is service. Elections matter, policies matter and debates matter, but in the end what matters most is the opportunity to serve others. That has been the defining privilege of my parliamentary career.

Over the years I have had the opportunity to meet thousands of Victorians from every walk of life: small business owners working long hours to support their families, volunteers who quietly strengthen the fabric of our communities, teachers shaping the next generation, health workers caring for people through their most difficult moments, police officers, emergency service volunteers, faith leaders, sporting clubs and community organisations whose work often goes unnoticed but whose contribution is invaluable. They are the people who have inspired me throughout my time in public life. I have always believed that the strength of Victoria lies not in this building alone but in the communities we represent. Looking back, I am proud of the projects, initiatives and advocacy that have helped improve the lives of local residents and of helping individuals navigate difficult circumstances and ensure their voices were heard. Many of those achievements will never appear in official records or headlines, but they matter deeply to the people concerned, and they remain among the moments I value most.

One of the greatest lessons of parliamentary life is that no member succeeds alone. Every achievement is built upon the work of countless others: community leaders who advocate passionately for their causes, dedicated public servants who provide advice and expertise, parliamentary staff who keep this institution functioning, volunteers who give their time freely, and families who provide support and encouragement. Politics often focuses attention on individuals, but genuine progress is always a collective effort.

I would like to acknowledge the people of my electorate who placed their trust in me. Whether they voted for me or not, I have always sought to represent every constituent to the best of my ability. Thank you for your confidence, your advice, your constructive criticism and your friendship. Thank you for welcoming me to your schools, businesses, sporting clubs, community centres and homes. Thank you for sharing your stories. Thank you for reminding me every day why public service matters.

To my parliamentary colleagues from all sides of politics, thank you. While vigorous debate is an essential part of our democracy, so too is mutual respect. While we have not always agreed, I have always respected the sincerity, dedication and commitment of those who choose a life of public service. I have formed friendships in this Parliament that I will value for the rest of my life, and it has been an honour to serve alongside you.

To my colleagues within the Liberal Party and the broader coalition, thank you for your support, encouragement and friendship. While it is dangerous to single out people, I did want to acknowledge my great friends from the class of 2006: Bill Tilley, member for Benambra; Michael O'Brien, member for Malvern; and Matthew Guy, member for Bulleen. They are all great mates and terrific people, and together we have shared plenty of laughter and achieved a great deal.

Political parties are built upon shared values and common purpose. Throughout my career I have been proud to stand alongside colleagues committed to individual opportunity, responsible government, strong communities and economic prosperity. I have also been privileged to serve in leadership and ministerial roles. It was an enormous honour to be elected Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition by my colleagues. I am particularly proud to have served as Minister for Ports, Minister for Major Projects and Minister for Manufacturing in the Napthine cabinet. The breadth of responsibilities enabled me to develop relationships across private industry, and I maintain many of these friendships today. Those responsibilities were among the greatest honours of my professional life.

The opportunity to contribute to policy development, to participate in important decisions and to represent Victoria in ministerial capacities is something I will always cherish. Such positions bring significant responsibility, and I remain grateful to those who entrusted me with those opportunities. I thank former premiers Ted Baillieu and Denis Napthine for their confidence and trust in me and for giving me the opportunity to serve in their cabinets. I have been fortunate to serve under seven incredibly capable and dedicated leaders. To Ted, Denis, Matthew, Michael, John, Brad and Jess, I thank each of you for your belief in me, your confidence and trust and your steadfast commitment to the people of Victoria.

I would also like to acknowledge the parliamentary staff, electorate officers and ministerial staff with whom I have worked over many years. The public often sees the parliamentarian, but behind every member stands a team of talented and committed individuals. To my electorate office staff, past and present, thank you for your professionalism, loyalty and dedication to helping local residents. To my long-serving electorate staff Emma, Tina and Sarah – especially Emma, who has been with me for 19 of those 20 years – you all have dealt compassionately with people facing difficult circumstances and managed through the challenging times of the COVID pandemic. You have celebrated community successes. You have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure constituents receive the assistance they need. Many people will never know how much you contributed, but I certainly do. You have my deepest gratitude.

I thank the members of the Croydon branch of the Liberal Party for their unwavering support throughout my career. I particularly acknowledge Fran Henderson and Lesley Neuparth, who have been with me for the entire journey, and Joy and Russell Davis, stalwarts of the party and all dear friends. I also pay tribute to the many family members, friends and supporters who stood beside me over the years. Without you none of this would have been possible. I also take the opportunity to acknowledge and thank my former federal colleagues Tony Smith and Michael Sukkar and the current member for Casey Aaron Violi. It has been terrific to work with you over many years.

To the clerks, attendants, security personnel, cleaners, catering staff, library staff and all the parliamentary employees, thank you for the work you do every day. Institutions endure because of the dedication of people whose contributions are often unseen. This Parliament is stronger because of your professionalism and commitment.

I also acknowledge Victoria's public servants across education, health, transport, emergency services and many other fields. The professionalism and dedication of both groups are essential to the effective functioning of our state and our Parliament. Public life, however, is not without its challenges. Politics can be demanding. There are long hours, difficult decisions, periods of uncertainty and significant personal sacrifices. Those sacrifices are rarely borne by the parliamentarian alone. They are shared by family. It has been said many times we are volunteers, but our families are conscripts. So today, more than anyone else I want to thank my family. To my late parents, my brothers Mick and Greg and extended family who supported me from the very beginning, thank you for the values you instilled in me. You taught me the importance of hard work, integrity, respect and service. Those lessons have guided me throughout my life.

To my children, thank you for your understanding and patience. There were school events I could not attend, family occasions interrupted by parliamentary responsibilities and many hours when public duties took me away from home. Your love and support have meant more than words can express.

My youngest son Baylin had not yet turned one when I was elected; he will turn 21 this December. It is a miracle that the things I used to drag him along to have not scarred him for life. I took him to a Greek Orthodox church service once that was held in Koine Greek language. We had to stand for an hour and a half, and he just glared at me the entire time. That cost me a McDonald's Happy Meal on the way home. Who makes their six-year-old attend a Liberal Party state council conference in Ballarat, sit in the front row with me and absorb one of Michael Kroger's presidential addresses? I love Michael dearly, but to endure that cost me another Happy Meal on the way home. We do feed

him a balanced diet. Baylin came out to me one day and said, 'Dad, I'm writing a book.' I said, 'What? That's great, mate. What's its title?' To which he replied, 'My most boring times with Dad' – true story. The following weekend I got him out of bed on a Saturday morning and he eagerly said, 'What are we going to do today, Dad?' And I said, 'Mate, I've got another chapter for your book.' It has not been all bad. I did fly him as an eight-year-old in business class to New York with me once – paid for by me, in case parliamentary services is listening. But a word of warning to all parents out there, a valuable lesson: do not introduce your children to business class on airlines as it becomes the expected mode of travel for the remainder of their time as a dependent child – huge mistake, never to be repeated.

All my kids have grown into fine young adults forging their own careers, buying their first homes and having children – we now have six grandchildren – and I am enormously proud of their achievements to date. They are great children with tremendous partners, all making their mark in this world. I should take the opportunity to congratulate my son Jaydan on hitting his first hole in one on the golf course two weeks ago. He plays off six, MOB, so the golf lessons are paying off. Two of my daughters are here this evening: Tayla, who has a wonderful career in early childhood education, and Breeanna, who is carving out a career as a teacher in the state school system. I might have been tempted to claim a small amount of credit for resolving the recent pay dispute, Minister Williams, but I suspect that would be stretching the truth somewhat.

Most importantly to my wife Christina, thank you. I said to my wife once that she should embrace her mistakes, and she immediately got up and gave me a hug. Yes, I remember that I missed that anniversary. I think I had a late-night meeting with the member for Benambra that night. On a serious note, politics is often described as a team endeavour, but for many families it can feel like an all-consuming commitment. Through every campaign, every challenge, every disappointment and every success you have been my strongest supporter and my most trusted adviser. You have carried burdens that many people never see. Quite simply, none of this would have been possible without you. I owe you far more than I can ever repay, so thank you.

As I prepare to leave Parliament, I do so with optimism about Victoria's future. We live in one of the most dynamic, diverse and successful states in the world. Our future challenges are real. We must continue improving affordability for families. We must support economic growth, investment and job creation. We must invest in essential services. We must strengthen our communities and maintain confidence in our democratic institutions. These challenges will require leadership, courage and cooperation, but I remain confident because time and time again I have seen the resilience and determination of Victorians.

I firmly believe Jess Wilson, the member for Kew, and her team are up for the challenge, and I wish them well at this election. I have every confidence in Jess and her team, and I know she has the qualities required to lead this state successfully. I also wish Grant Hutchinson, the Liberal candidate for Croydon, every success. To those who will serve in this Parliament in the years ahead, I offer one simple observation: never forget why you came here. Politics can become consumed by process, tactics and headlines, but the real purpose of this institution is service. Listen carefully, treat people with respect, maintain your integrity, remain connected to your community and remember that every decision affects real people and real families. If you do that, you will never lose sight of what matters most.

As I conclude, I want to reflect briefly on the extraordinary privilege of representing my community. Very few people are given the opportunity to serve in a Parliament. Fewer still are entrusted repeatedly with that responsibility. For that privilege, I will remain forever grateful. When I walk out of this chamber as a member for the final time, I will do so with immense pride, deep gratitude and countless cherished memories. I have been fortunate to work alongside remarkable people, I have been fortunate to represent an extraordinary community and I have been fortunate to contribute in my own small way to the great ongoing story of Victoria. While my parliamentary chapter is coming to an end, my

commitment to our community and our state will continue. Public service takes many forms, and I look forward to contributing in new ways in the years ahead.

To everyone who has supported me throughout this journey: thank you. Thank you for your trust. Thank you for your friendship. Thank you for the opportunity to serve. It has been the honour of a lifetime. I wish the Parliament, my colleagues and the people of Victoria every success for the future. I am profoundly grateful for the privilege of serving, and I commend my community, this Parliament and our great state to the future. Thank you.

Members applauded.

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge former minister and former member for Nepean the Honourable Martin Dixon in the gallery.

Member for Rowville

Valedictory statement

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (18:21): It is always a hard act to follow the member for Croydon. Well done, you always set a bar too high to jump. A special thanks to the member for Benambra for coming down especially to listen to Hodgett's and my speeches, and a big thanks to our whip Chris Crewther for sorting all this out. I would like to thank the chamber for allowing me to deliver my very last speech, and I need to squash 34 years as an MP into 15 minutes. I would like to thank the Liberal Party for giving someone like me the chance of a lifetime to serve the good people of Victoria.

Although born in Leongatha, we moved to Bairnsdale when I was young. My dad was a strong Labor supporter, and my mum was a strong Country Party supporter who thought that Pauline Hanson was too far left for her conservative views. But I think the proudest moment of her life was the day Tim Bull was elected for Gippsland East. We lived in the old housing commission area of Dalmahoy Street, and I think Tim Bull described it as an area that had 'more than its fair share of police call-outs', and it is a pity that reputation followed our family when we moved to Moroney Street. Tim, a big thankyou for single-handedly getting me into the Bairnsdale High School hall of fame after being rejected for decades.

I had the worst speech impediment possible. For the life of me, I could not say 'th'; they were 'f's, so 'firty-fwee'. I could not say 'r's; they were 'w's, so 'wed' instead of 'red'. And my 's's – God only knows where they went, but I used to say 'chixty-chix'. It is no wonder I was invited to so many parties for their entertainment, and it took me years of therapy to correct it.

I was fortunate enough to have joined Cubs and Scouts at a young age, and I became obsessed with working hard to gain badges, so 'Reward for effort' became my motto, and it is still the Liberal Party belief that I align with the most: reward for effort. At 14 I told my father, the strong Labor supporter who left school at grade 6, that I had two aims in life: to play footy until I was 40 and to go into Liberal politics. At age 15 I was put up for foster care. But I can assure members it was not because of our political differences; it was for other reasons. I moved from family to family, and I was eventually placed with a Christian family out at Waterholes, a farming family about 33 kilometres north-east of Bairnsdale. The problem was that they would not pick me up from footy training on a Tuesday and Thursday night, so I refused to comply. They placed me in a Jehovah's Witness men's boarding house. There were a few good men in their 60s and me, by that time 16, and they were very good to me. They did not celebrate birthdays, but I make up for it now.

I joined the Liberal Party at 20, played footy, went mountain climbing and hiking around the world, got married to Judy and had two incredible sons, Sam and Tom. I was preselected for the Liberal Party for the seat of Wantirna in 1991 and legged it to this place in 1992, and 34 years later I am leaving as the member for Rowville. Peter Poggioli was my first state Liberal director, and I have always been indebted to him.

Just four years in as an MP, my dad died, and I wanted to climb Mount Aconcagua in Argentina, the highest mountain in the world outside the Himalaya. As a trade-off, Judy wanted a baby daughter. The Wells family had gone for 106 years with no girls, but thank goodness we had our beautiful daughter Tahnee. Some say she should have been called Aconcagua.

I have worked with some of the most incredible leaders, who I have admired greatly: Denis Napthine, who was opposition leader and later Premier and gave me the start as a shadow minister – I admired his intellect; Robert Doyle, who could read a 50-page document and give a perfect presser after reading it; the great Ted Baillieu, who won the 2010 state election against all the odds, and his team, including Michael Kapel, his chief of staff, who would have to be one of the most brilliant, toughest men I have ever met, along with Tony Nutt, director of the Victorian Liberal Party, and Glenn Corey, who headed up the costings of our policies, as well as the brilliant Robert Clark, who did all things legal and finance. They all did a successful and remarkable job.

We lost the 2014 election, and we could have blamed everyone and everything, but we had to get back on the horse, and under Matthew Guy's leadership we did just that. I was very proud to serve under Michael O'Brien when he was leader, and as his Manager of Opposition Business. We worked well as a team. When Michael O'Brien was in the room, I considered him to be the smartest person in that room every time. Brad Battin, thank you for your friendship and your leadership of the party.

In 34 years of Parliament I have never had a coffee, never had a cigarette. I have never smoked marijuana; sorry to the choofers. I have never touched a drop of alcohol here in Parliament. I never got a tattoo. And I restrained myself from using the words 'You can't be that stupid' 2166 times. And thank you, Richard, for your guidance in this area.

What I will not miss are the constant emails requesting me to speak at a women's leadership conference somewhere around the world or my many emails addressed to Mrs, Ms or Miss Kim or Kimberly Wells. Bridget, I think we may have had a case just recently where I was required to speak on a panel until they realised I was a male. However, I will miss lunch with Nicole and Joe, Mel's chocolate bullets and the boys trips away – or maybe we can continue them as grumpy old men – under the leadership of Blackwood, Tilley or Normie.

It is probably at this point I should correct the record from Martin Dixon's valedictory speech, where he claimed that we had slept together. Yes, it was in a tent on many occasions, but the divider down the centre of the tent was the same as the dividers in Northern Ireland separating the Protestants and the Catholics, including the barbed wire along the top of the fence.

My thankyou to the preselectors who made all this happen for me – Rob and Ailsa Llewellyn, Val and Gary Edwards, Carl and Chris Aldons, Tom and Carmen Blazé – and to my campaign teams, again led by Rob Llewellyn, Geoff White, David Apelt and my close mate Ev Duke, who have supported me through thick and thin. To every single branch member who stood on polling booths, did letterboxing, street walks and attended fundraisers I say a huge thankyou for your assistance and your friendship.

Thank you to my incredible staff: at the very beginning, Marg Briggs, who encouraged me to walk the Kokoda Track; Cath Hilton, my first full-time EO – in those days you were only allowed one electorate officer per office, and geez, I miss that fax machine; and Chris Costello, who was my EO, then followed me into the Treasury offices as my brilliant gatekeeper.

I had the very best ministerial team, and I will always be so grateful. A very special thankyou to our driver Alan McIntyre, who became a lifetime mate. I also had the best parliamentary secretary, the member for Caulfield. I could not forget Kimmy McFarlane. When she arrived at the office there was mass confusion at having two people in the office with the name Kim, so one of us had to be called Kimmy, and it certainly was not going to be me. I am sure Kim Kardashian's social life would match Kim McFarlane's. We were incredibly fortunate to take Gary Blackwood's advice and employ Stuart Gibson, and he transformed our office onto social media platforms that I had not even heard of. I see

a huge future for him. Then we took Stuart's advice and employed Jesse, a brilliant young man with the best manners of anyone. Then Lachie, who was introduced to us and told us all about AI or A1 or something like that, which I still do not understand. Both Jesse and Lachie will also go a long way.

Being accused of assaulting someone – anyone – is dreadful, and you feel that any credibility that you have has been lost. This happened to me on the first day of pre-poll in the 2018 election. The disgraced former mayor of Knox Joe Cossari put on Facebook on the Tuesday night that I had assaulted him and then went to the police and the Victorian Electoral Commission to lodge an official complaint. Although there were about 20 people handing out how-to-vote cards with volunteers, no-one saw a thing because it never happened. I had my mugshot taken and was interviewed by police, and they agreed they had no witnesses to substantiate Cossari's claim. I always remember a woman walking past me at pre-poll saying, 'I don't vote for thugs.' Even though it never happened, it still seems to stay with you. After years of defamation, with the judge ruling in my favour and awarding costs, Cossari had one more disgraceful act: he declared bankruptcy, leaving my lawyers, Carbone, and my family hundreds of thousands of dollars out of pocket. I will always be grateful for Manny Carbone from Carbone Lawyers and my electorate staff for standing so firm with me.

Next, can I thank my current staff, who have been long-term friends. Lois Hutchings is 80-something, and we have known each other since preselection. Lois, I have always valued your advice, hard work and absolute loyalty, especially when we were under attack. Julia McIntyre, you have been a new addition, and we have loved having you as part of our team. You have obviously inherited your mother's sense of humour. Colleen Black is the best electorate officer anyone could have. You have been hardworking and you always know what to do with the constituents – the number of voters who always say to me on the polling booth, 'Please thank Colleen for helping us so much.' Glenn Corey, not many people in the world have your intellect, and you know, like many others, that I would not have reached the positions I did without you. Your measured analysis and fearless and frank advice have always been appreciated, and you are a great mate.

To the Scoresby City Club set up in the mid-1990s to help our fundraising – Ev Duke, Tony Raso, John King, Karyn Jones and Martin Pettit – I will always be so grateful to every single member who did the hard work over so many years. To the Grassroots Club set up in the 1990s to keep everyone grounded, I really appreciate the laughs, the hikes, the mountain climbing and the many more adventures to come. And no, Tony Holland does not have the casting vote, and our meetings will proceed along the same lines, hopefully without the prosecco.

On to my incredible family. Judy, before I went into politics I promised you that if I lost the election we would live in South Africa for one year with your mum and dad and family. What I did not tell you, which I am confessing now, is that I prayed to God every night before the election that I would win so I did not have to live in South Africa. I am owning up to it now. To my three kids Sam, Tom and Alicia – Tahnee – and our cutest grandson Oscar: I am so extremely proud of you all and cannot wait to spend more quality time with you, including surfing, minigolf, more footy, more sporting events, where I am guessing Kim buys the alcohol, and a bit more time at cubs.

To every single person who has worked in this incredible building I say thank you. To the clerks Bridget, Vaughn, Paul and Joel, thanks for your expertise in running this place and the ethics committee with Daniela. Thanks to the attendants, VPS staff, especially Brenda and Janelle, as well as Adam and the security and the cleaning staff and IT, and a special thanks to Peter Lochert for when he was here.

The work of the parliamentary committee system is so valuable, and I have been very fortunate to have had brilliant committee secretariats led by Sandy Cook. Despite our political differences, we have become good friends. I hope I can form the same friendship with Sean Coley when I retire. Sean is an exceptional administrator. Tim Read, although he is a greenie, was an excellent chair, and with the members for Sandringham and Mildura we held the IBAC and Integrity and Oversight committees to account.

Finally, to the future and the upcoming election. To Jess Wilson, born into a Liberal family with a brilliant political brain, you lead with intellect, consistently have a great sense of humour and have surrounded yourself with brilliant people, and that is the hallmark of a good leader. Please be sure that I will be working day and night to assist you and the team. We have an exceptional candidate in Rowville with Max Williams, who is working as hard as any candidate I have seen. Jess, apart from having a strong Liberal team, you have a strong coalition partner in the Nationals, ably led by Danny O'Brien, who Judy has voted the funniest person in Parliament. I still do not get it; I am sorry, I just do not get it. I was mortified when Steph Ryan left Parliament – I am sorry, Steph, I am still annoyed by your decision. But now, with losing three exceptional Nats in Peter Walsh, Tim Bull and Kim O'Keeffe, the coalition team will not be quite the same.

I wish everyone the very best and look forward to spending a bit more time with those MPs who are retiring. And Cindy, for once in my life I will take your advice, from someone who I consider a mate – well, some of the time. Cindy said to me, 'Don't overcommit in retirement,' and she is right. Finally, most importantly, to the constituents, who have placed their faith in me time and time again, I am forever grateful. It was my honour to work for you. Thank you.

Members applauded.

Bills

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (18:41): I rise after that cavalcade of memories heading out the door, and hopefully, when the opportunity arises to debate and get the true benefit of an Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission with extra powers, there will be many more out the door before we get a chance to see that – and probably many of them will not have had an opportunity to do a valedictory, but we will wait and see. The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, this Parliament, the community, the media and the commentary in the state have been calling for more powers and more sensible capacity for this organisation to hold corruption to account here in the state of Victoria. We are broadly supportive of this bill because it does increase some of the powers for the commission to follow the money and other commonsense objectives that the community have been calling for for quite some time. However, for some reason the government, in the dying days of its regime, has decided to bring some changes, but it has cunningly not allowed these changes to look into some of the biggest issues of the last 12 years. The community has been calling out now for some time: what happened to the \$15 billion? Or is it \$15 billion? Is it more than \$15 billion? And if it is \$15 billion, where has it gone, who has got it, who has benefited, and worst of all, who in government has allowed it to happen? These are some of the most important questions of our day at the moment. What has happened to it?

It is not just the corruption at this massive level that has been wrapped up in the Big Build, which seems to have been undertaken by everyone from bikie gangs to the CFMEU and probably big business and others within the realms of the Big Build that have taken advantage of a system. This government, right up until this week, the very last dying days of the government, has finally been prepared to accept that there is a problem and bring in some changes. But there is a loophole in this, and this is the part that most Victorians will have great concern about. It is all very well to increase the powers of IBAC, but in increasing the powers of IBAC, the community expects that all the carry-on for the last 12 years will have an opportunity to be looked at. This legislation specifically excludes any cases that have already been referred to the police or to IBAC or have been looked at.

We know that over the last 12 months in particular the former Premier, the member for Bendigo East, made much of the fact that these various cases were being referred to the police and that in itself excluded them from being looked at further by IBAC, and that is the great missed opportunity in this

bill. You might call it a missed opportunity, but many others, including the opposition, say it is a deliberate act by this government to protect two former premiers and most likely our current Premier and Deputy Premier. It is simply not good enough that we are going to bring a piece of legislation in that is not going to seriously look at the missing dollars, the missing cash, and who has been responsible.

We know that there is much work to be done at the IBAC level in terms of crime and corruption. The member for South-West Coast, who is sitting here alongside me, and I have for a long time been campaigning about the missed opportunities on the Warrnambool train line. Those missed opportunities are because there have not been enough funds in this government to maintain train stations, maintain enough seats and maintain catering. Catering on the Warrnambool train, for example, was a service that was in existence for well over a hundred years. For well over a hundred years those that managed our V/Line services managed to move a train from Warrnambool to Melbourne and serve you a cup of coffee, some sandwiches and a hot pie. These are services beyond the capacity of the state these days. One of the reasons, quite simply, is we read last week in the late-night update that the former CEO of V/Line had literally stolen hundreds of thousands of dollars from V/Line. The one CEO and four other as yet not-named co-conspirators have just taken cash from the V/Line system under the watch of this government. And that is just one department. We need an IBAC that can fully investigate and find out: if that is happening in V/Line, is it happening in the Department of Education – which it has in the past – and is it happening in the Department of Health? Where else is hard-earned money from taxpayers evaporating under the watch of this government? We do not know, because this government has absolutely failed transparency 101. We do not know where else the cash has gone as we rapidly approach the \$200 billion debt level in this state.

Quite frankly, when we look back to see what that has delivered us, it has delivered us a budget deficit and it has delivered us tunnels and civic projects that this government has been happy to proudly talk about, but the reality is they have cost way too much, they have taken way too long and they really are not delivering the benefits the government has spoken of. Most notably, people from Polwarth have absolutely driven past, in fairly large degrees of disgust, the West Gate Tunnel, for example, which on any given day during peak hour is empty. We know, just looking at that, that not only has that tunnel cost twice what the government said it would and not only has it been delivered over budget and years behind schedule – it was supposed to open in 2022, and it has only just opened – but also it is not delivering the time savings to people getting to the city on a basis that means it will even pay for itself with the revenues, so who is picking up the tab there? These are just some of the examples of where the money has gone. The question that our community has is: how did this happen? How did we substitute an obvious link that would have linked from the Eastern Freeway all the way through, ultimately, to the Western Ring Road – a really obvious east–west transit of the city of Melbourne, and by the way it cost us over \$1 billion to stop that project – with the West Gate Tunnel? These are questions Victorians want answered, because we have now spent \$11 billion-odd to build this tunnel that clearly is not what it was cracked up to be.

These are some of the questions that IBAC will be able to look at. Who made that decision? Did people benefit when they made that decision? What was in it, ultimately, for the people of Victoria? We know, for example, that Operation Richmond, which has been sitting on this government's books for the best part of 10 years, is just a disgrace in terms of what it has meant for the wonderful volunteers of the CFA that have worked in and looked after particularly our regional and country communities so well for so long. We find that all sorts of words were used – 'misleading and deceptive conduct' – for all types of behaviours that the current IBAC has not been able to progress in any way, shape or form. It has not been able to hold people to account. We have seen huge upheaval in our emergency services provision to our volunteers, and in that upheaval we have found that the average age of our trucks has got older. We have got CFA stations all over Victoria that are no longer fit for purpose. They may not have proper toilets, they may not have change room facilities and they may not even be able to house the local truck.

We have got this complete breakdown in basic infrastructure. We have had disconnect and discontent for nearly a decade now, and yet when the government has allowed some sort of inquiry into what went wrong we have got no outcomes. These are the types of issues that a beefed-up IBAC needs to be able to re prosecute if necessary and look at to the satisfaction of the average person in Victoria who really feels that the last 12 years have left a very long and sad legacy of lack of governance, lack of transparency and lack of care and concern by government. In my role on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, for example, we saw time and time again a minister and senior bureaucrats prepared to fob off obvious problems with: it was not their responsibility, they do not recall or they were not responsible at the time. These types of responses have got to stop in the state of Victoria. At some point the government of the day must take responsibility. This bill, sadly, will not deliver the benefits this government has promised, and it makes it hard to imagine how we get it clear.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (18:51): I rise to speak in support of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment Bill 2026. I would like to take the member for Polwarth up on a few of his contributions there, starting of course with the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, where I am also a member. Just to clarify, no minister said they could not recall, and when a minister said it was not under their purview, that was because you were asking the wrong minister with the wrong portfolio, which was actually –

Richard Riordan: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, just to remind the member for Yan Yean that the Treasurer at the time, when asked about her taxes to pay for the tunnel –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. I encourage the member for Yan Yean to make her contributions through the Chair.

Lauren KATHAGE: I am glad the member for Polwarth raised the Warrnambool train line, which we have spent a great deal of money upgrading so that it now carries a full fleet of VLocity trains.

Roma Britnell: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the upgrades are downgrades. We have got 10,000 less seats per week.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Frivolous points of order that are not points of order are very annoying.

Lauren KATHAGE: The reason I am talking about this is because the member opposite made an argument that we were not investing in important infrastructure, and I want to show that that is incorrect. Never mind the pies and sausage rolls, I am talking about a full VLocity fleet; safety infrastructure upgrades, including 60 public level crossings, which is massive; as well as higher service frequencies, which I am sure the good people of that train line would welcome. I do not want to delve too much into his contribution regarding emergency services, because I found that he did not really have a clear line of argument there. I would just like to point out that funding and support for our emergency services such as the CFA and SES are much larger under this government than they were under the Liberal–National government. That will always be the case, because we are a party that supports the regions, that understands the importance of being ready for fire season and that takes practical action to support brigades and make sure that our fantastic volunteers have what they need.

Putting that aside, I turn to the heart of the bill, which is about the simple principle that public money should remain accountable wherever it goes. Whether it goes all the way down the Warrnambool line or whether it goes into the CFA, wherever it goes, it should remain accountable. When it moves through a major contractor, subcontractor or labour hire, if they are performing a public function, then scrutiny should not evaporate.

That scrutiny must remain. Wherever public money is involved in that way, IBAC should be able to follow it. In a fast-growing area like mine this is really important because we are building so much infrastructure for the benefit of our community. Four new schools have been built. There have been eight school upgrades and many large road upgrades. There is a lot of public money being invested into Yan Yean, and it is only right that the people of Yan Yean and the people working on those sites

can have full confidence that that money is being spent as it is intended, which is for the benefit of the good people of Yan Yean. I want to make sure that every last cent in the dollar goes towards them, and that is one of the reasons why I so strongly support this.

There are two important ways that this bill supports the ability to make sure that every cent in the dollar is carefully watched. The first is the follow-the-money powers, which I spoke about earlier, but the second is around broadening the definition of 'corrupt conduct'. At the moment, as we know, the act refers to a relevant offence, which is a relatively narrow threshold. We want to make sure that IBAC is able to investigate serious integrity concerns that may not fit within that existing definition. This bill replaces that threshold so that now the threshold is conduct that would constitute any offence or a serious disciplinary matter. I think the member for Polwarth was getting that a little bit confused in his contribution when he was speaking about V/Line, because he was speaking about somebody who had actually been found guilty of a criminal offence and I think jailed for six years or for quite some time. Obviously that was already within potential scope.

We know that integrity rules need to apply to people exercising public power, including elected people, so we should not be asking for stronger scrutiny unless we are willing to have stronger scrutiny ourselves. There is no lower standard that we would be willing to accept. We know that IBAC has strongly supported the key reforms of this bill, as well as Integrity Oversight Victoria. The bill deals carefully with historical and existing matters, and I am sure we have heard that thrashed out in the media and in the chamber today. But I just want to be clear that there is a sensible balance that is being struck through what is before the house. We want a stronger integrity body, and stronger integrity laws still need clear rules, procedural fairness and legal certainty, and there is that practical transition as well. This was something that was announced immediately upon the current Premier being elevated.

This bill will commence the day after royal assent, showing that substantive powers will be available immediately, because it is something that is a very high priority for this government. At IBAC's request, however, mandatory notification obligations will begin six months after, giving IBAC the time to work with affected organisations on their responsibilities. But this is part of a broader reform program. We know that the Integrity and Oversight Committee conducted work into IBAC's legislative framework. The government supported 21 of the recommendations in principle from that work, and we are bringing forward these reforms now knowing that there will be another tranche to come, because the work does not stop here. In fact we will never stop ensuring that there is integrity and accountability for public money. This is not the end of the work.

I also want to address the context in which these reforms are being debated. There are serious allegations concerning misconduct and criminal activity on major public infrastructure projects, and as I said, with such big –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am required to interrupt the member under sessional orders. The member will have the call when the matter returns to the house.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Patient transport

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (19:00): (1819) My adjournment issue is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to immediately lift the Victorian patient transport assistance scheme travel and accommodation subsidies to be comparative with the national levels. In 2026 the Australian patient travel subsidy scorecard put Victoria dead last, an appalling indictment on a Labor government which boasts about the strength and fairness of its health system. Under VPTAS, accommodation assistance is just \$49.50 a night, and I challenge the minister to find decent

accommodation close to a major Melbourne hospital for \$49.50 a night. A regional Victorian driving hundreds of kilometres for cancer treatment gets 21 cents per kilometre, the lowest rate in Australia. These are not people taking holidays or choosing to drive to Melbourne for a weekend away. They are cancer patients, people with serious and sometimes life-threatening illnesses, parents taking sick children to specialists and carers putting their lives on hold to support someone they love. Because they live in regional Victoria, this government expects them to shoulder costs that metropolitan patients simply do not face. It is no wonder the Leukaemia Foundation and 19 other organisations are calling for urgent reform. Your postcode should not determine how much it costs you to stay alive. Therefore I urge the minister to please lift the VPTAS travel and accommodation subsidies to be comparative with the rest of Australia.

Data centres

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (19:01): (1820) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Planning. The action I seek is that the minister does not approve a data centre in Miners Rest if requested by developer Resi Ventures. Miners Rest locals learned about the proposed data centre at the same time as the rest of the market, through an ASX announcement back in June. There has been no planning approval, no permits issued and no meaningful consultation with the community. That is simply not good enough. A project of this scale and significance cannot be imposed on a community without proper scrutiny, transparency and engagement. Miners Rest families deserve to be consulted before decisions are made that could fundamentally change their local area. They deserve clear information about the impacts on infrastructure, traffic, water, energy use, amenity and the future character of their community. The developer, Resi Ventures, cannot expect to announce a major development to investors and then leave local residents in the dark. Resi Ventures needs to come forward and explain what is being proposed and what the impacts of this project would be for Miners Rest. Our community deserves answers, transparency and respect – nothing less.

Rotary Club of Manningham City

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (19:03): (1821) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Veterans, and it relates to an issue concerning the Rotary Club of Manningham City and its annual school Anzac Day service. For 35 years the Rotary Club of Manningham City has organised an important school Anzac Day service, bringing together around 700 local students each year to commemorate and learn about the sacrifice of our service men and women. Each year the club applies for the Victoria Remembers grant program to assist with student and teacher transport and the audio facilities required for the service, which is held at the Templestowe cenotaph. The club applied to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and asked for its application to be accepted, given its 35-year history of delivering this community event, but it was unaware that for 2027 the application deadline had been brought forward from September to July. The response was that applications lodged after the closing date could not be accepted. I understand the importance of grant deadlines, but surely there is room for some form of common sense and discretion when a longstanding community organisation has missed a deadline because of a change to the timing of the grant, rather than through any lack of commitment to the program. This is not a new event or a new applicant; it is a community organisation that has delivered the same important service in Manningham for 35 years and that has brought hundreds of young Victorians together each year to commemorate Anzac Day. I ask the minister to reconsider this specific case and grant the Rotary Club of Manningham City its application for the 2027 Victoria Remembers grant, which would then facilitate the school Anzac Day service in 2027, as it has for the last 35 years.

Don Bosco youth centre

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (19:05): (1822) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Youth, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide me with an update on the ongoing investments, programs and resources that our Victorian Labor government continues to make to provide for and help young people across my electorate of Pascoe Vale and my community of Merri-

bek. Further to my adjournment matter of 27 August, I again raise this youth matter in the context of the future of the Don Bosco youth centre and hostel. As I previously said, both the Salesians and Merri-bek council have a fundamental and important role here to step up in helping us explore and progress consideration for future opportunities. With respect to the Salesians, along with extending the EOI process, we also urge them to publicly disclose any records, documentation or information available regarding the original donation by the local Danelli family in 1939 of the land and the site on which Don Bosco now sits, including any known terms, conditions, understandings or expectations attached to the donation and the intended ongoing use of the land for young people and community in perpetuity.

As Merri-bek continues to grow, including via the central Coburg, Brunswick and Sydney Road activity centre corridors, we need more recreational spaces, not less, for young people, especially children of primary school age, to learn, grow and thrive. That is why, beyond their symbolic motion of 12 August, Merri-bek council needs to also step up. They should consider and be honest with the community about whether the council could acquire or contribute towards the future acquisition of the site; whether council could partner with the future owner or not-for-profit organisation, including through contributing towards operational costs; whether council could support the continued or temporary operation of youth services at Don Bosco under a shared, non-government or other ownership-type model over the short, medium or even longer term; and whether council considers investment in other community-run or council-owned youth spaces to be a more appropriate use of its resources and if so, why. Given the significant precedent it set itself in purchasing many other strategic sites across the municipality, why can council not potentially consider the same here for Don Bosco? Also, are there any planning controls the council could consider at the appropriate time, if needed, to help preserve an ongoing space for youth activities and/or recreation activities as part of any possible future development? I remain absolutely committed to supporting my community, supporting victim-survivors and doing all I can to help facilitate a positive outcome on the future of Don Bosco. My federal and state colleagues and I continue to work very closely on this matter. However, it all begins with the Salesians and Merri-bek council firstly stepping up to take ownership and responsibility and being honest about the matters I have raised as the essential first step.

As part of this I also commend the local community on their ongoing Save Don Bosco campaign. I have continued to meet with and support them, including by welcoming them to Parliament today to meet with the Minister for Youth, Minister Grigorovitch; Sheena Watt MLC in the other place; and parent advocates Lee Cath, Erin Dale, Kate Longley and Sarah Fiddaman, all of whom did a magnificent job in articulating the strong connections so many local families have to the continuity of Don Bosco. I have also met with many others, and I commend their work: Peter Khalil, federal member for Wills; Gabe Steger, the state Labor candidate for Brunswick; Father Peter Hoang from the Salesians; Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne representatives; and many other stakeholders very interested in this issue. We are very interested in the future of Don Bosco.

Community safety

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (19:08): (1823) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Police, and I call on him to intervene urgently to curb Victoria's crime crisis. Two weeks ago a 10-year-old boy and his mum were violently attacked by a man in Melbourne, and I raised their story here that same day with the details that we knew. I was shocked when I was on my social media and saw in my direct messages a message from the mum, Cherie, who wrote:

Hi Nicole, I'm the mum you spoke about in regards to the attack in the city with my children. I just wanted to say thank you for being a voice for me about what happened ...

I was discharged last night, so really glad to be back with my boys. I will be ok, because I won't let – the alleged offender –

... win. I fought that day and will fight every day if I have to.

She went on to say that she does not want this to just be another story forgotten about in a week. None of these stories should be. Things need to change. Too many people are being hurt and killed and not enough is being done. So it was in our conversation that I offered to raise Cherie's story in her own words in this place, and this is what she has to say in her own words:

On 25 August, my three sons and I were in the Melbourne CBD ... after travelling to the city for my 10-year-old son's regular MRI. He has an extremely rare, inoperable brain tumour and ... requires scans every three months to determine whether it has grown or spread.

A male was walking past us, and without warning or provocation, lunged over me and coward punched my 10-year-old directly to the side of his head, sending him to the ground.

When the male turned and came back towards us, I placed myself between him and my children. He stabbed me in the face, knocked me to the ground, placed me in a headlock and repeatedly stabbed me in my back, shoulder and arm.

I was stabbed five times, suffered injuries to my face and fractured my leg while fighting to keep him away from my boys.

One of my sons was unable to run and stood there screaming, "Mum, Mum," as he watched me being attacked. I held onto the man with everything I had because I believed that if I let go, he could turn and attack my child again.

No child should be coward punched. No child should witness their mother being violently attacked and stabbed. No mother should have to use her own body as a shield to prevent a violent man from reaching her children.

Cherie went on to say:

I believe the Victorian Government is complicit through its failure to adequately protect the public. A flawed bail system, insufficient police resources, weak consequences and a legal process that repeatedly allows convicted offenders to continue offending place innocent people at unacceptable risk.

Cherie is right: the government has let Victorians down. In her own words:

... My children cannot simply walk away from what they witnessed. I cannot take back the stab wounds, my fractured leg or the moment I heard my child screaming while believing he might be watching his mother die.

Kingswood golf course

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (19:11): (1824) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Planning, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide the latest update on the developments of the former Kingswood golf course. This development is a significant issue for many Dingley Village residents. It is something that is raised with me on a regular basis, and I have been in regular contact with the minister and her office on this issue going back to April 2025. I would like to reiterate some of the community concerns around supporting infrastructure for the development, density, neighbourhood character, roads and open space.

While there are some road improvements which have been included for Centre Dandenong Road, some updates on the stormwater drainage assets and some clearer outcomes on landscape and tree retention, the community wants to see much more to make sure this represents a net community benefit for Dingley Village. Community concerns remain around the number of dwellings and the request to have multiple-storey dwellings located in the centre of the development, and they want to better maintain neighbourhood character and ensure amenity for existing and future residents.

In terms of the net community benefit and supporting infrastructure, the community funding from the proponent towards an offsite multipurpose community centre, which includes a kindergarten, is welcome. Road improvements are also welcome, but there are still concerns about the Centre Dandenong Road and Tootal Road roundabout and the McClure Road and Tootal Road intersection. Further, community concerns around parking and health services still need to be addressed, and residents feel further consideration should be provided to residential and community aged care within single-storey dwellings for downsizing residents as well as the need for expanded facilities at existing primary and secondary schools for Dingley Village kids.

Finally, the proposed contributions toward an offsite active and open-space reserve and sports pavilion are welcome, but the Kingswood fields proposed advocacy concept needs to be considered as a relevant project. I will continue to advocate strongly with the minister through the planning permit stage, which represents another opportunity for improvement, and I will continue to update the community as it progresses. As the local member and as a resident of Dingley Village, I will continue to push hard for a community net benefit for Dingley Village. I thank the minister and am looking forward to her response.

Glenferrie Primary School

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (19:13): (1825) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to urgently address and fund much-needed refurbishments of all bathrooms at Glenferrie Primary School in Hawthorn. Over many years I have attended Glenferrie Primary School, a great learning place, where my own three daughters received their primary education and where I served on school council for a period and worked constructively with its leadership. There is, however, an ongoing and serious issue around the state of the school's toilets and bathrooms. These toilets are more than 50 years old. The school's toilets are dilapidated, unhygienic and unfit for purpose, and the smell is overwhelming. In fact back in July Glenferrie school council president Hannah Hammad described the toilets as 'worse than a prison'. These are facilities that should not be used by any student or staff member. Some students are actually refusing to use the toilets and having accidents in the classroom.

There is a baseless perception that just because the school is in Hawthorn the school does not need upgrades or refurbishment because the area is affluent. This is a government school serving hundreds of local students and their families, and it is the responsibility of any caring and compassionate government that a school under their management is looked after. It does not matter whether the school is in Mildura, Traralgon, Sandringham or Hawthorn, every student at any school in Victoria deserves clean, hygienic and fit-for-purpose facilities. There should be no discrimination, no matter the postcode.

School principal Tanya Gurney is an exceptional leader who is leading a truly exceptional school community. It is squarely the responsibility of government to hear the cries of the school that needs its support. Earlier this year the Victorian School Building Authority categorised the school as 'worn'; I think it is much worse than worn, it is totally unacceptable. Expanding beyond just the toilets, the junior school has old, decommissioned heaters, leaving some of the school's youngest students shivering in classrooms in the middle of winter – no better, it can be argued, than the conditions of the school when it was first built in 1878.

Hannah Hammad has launched a change.org petition for urgent government investment in the school, with 518 signatures as of this morning. I urge the minister to come down and visit with me and have a look at the state of the toilets and the classrooms. Let us give the students of Glenferrie Primary School the best start in life. With more than 150 years of history, let us ensure that it can continue to deliver quality education for the next 150 years. The Liberals and Nationals will ensure Glenferrie Primary School receives the urgent funds and repairs it needs. I encourage this Labor government to do the same.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Northcote, member for Hawthorn, there were two actions within that. There was one originally, and then there was –

John PESUTTO: To urgently address and fund much-needed infrastructure.

Alphington housing development

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (19:16): (1826) My adjournment is to the Minister for Housing, Building and Precincts and Minister for Homelessness. I ask the minister to seek confirmation from Nightingale Housing that the walking and cycling connection proposed as part of

the 1A Hamilton Street development in Alphington will be designed and delivered to fulfil its intended role as a C2 main route within Victoria's strategic cycling corridors.

First, I want to acknowledge that this is a very positive project for our community. The Nightingale project will turn a long underutilised and vacant government site into around 70 homes, including seven affordable homes for low-income women and their families, through a partnership with Women's Property Initiatives. This is exactly the kind of housing our community needs, and we are proud to support more homes in the inner north next to transport, schools and health services. I have been advocating for this site and its future for many years, including raising the former rail spur in Parliament and securing a formal community consultation process. I have continued to meet with the Alphington and Fairfield Civic Association (AFCA), who have been closely engaged in the future of this site and represent many local residents. There is a lot to welcome here, including that as a direct result of our local advocacy, a requirement for a shared user path was prominent in the expression of interest and request for proposal process for this land.

But AFCA has rightly raised with me an important question about the proposed walking and cycling connection. The publicly released concepts show a landscaped internal route through the development. That is encouraging, but the level of detail currently available is not clear about exactly what that route will mean in practice. In particular there is not yet sufficient detail about its precise alignment, end points, width, design standard or the arrangements that will ensure it remains publicly accessible. This matters because it is not simply an internal pathway within a housing development; Transport Victoria maps the former rail spur as a C2 strategic cycling corridor. Strategic cycling corridors are intended to provide continuous, safe, direct and connected routes linking people to stations, schools, shops, activity centres and employment. The Alphington spur has the potential to perform exactly that role: it can provide a missing link between Fairfield and South Alphington, connecting into the broader network around the Yarra and trails, Chandler Highway and Wingrove Street. There is a real opportunity here to take what is currently an informal and fragmented movement line and create a permanent and genuinely useful connection for people walking and riding. And importantly, this is the moment to get it right. Once housing, fences, services and ownership arrangements are established, it becomes harder to retrofit a continuous route.

As I said before, this project represents a very good housing outcome for Alphington. Locals also want it to deliver the full benefit it can for the community: new homes, quality open space and a shared user path that enhances our active transport network. There is one opportunity to get that connection right from the outset, and we seek that assurance from Nightingale.

Martha Cove underpass, Safety Beach

Anthony MARSH (Nepean) (19:19): (1827) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister review the Martha Cove underpass lighting upgrade, including its costs, residents liability under a section 173 agreement and its exclusion from the Victorian energy upgrades program. The Martha Cove underpass at Safety Beach provides access between the marina and Port Phillip Bay. Under a section 173 agreement entered into when Martha Cove was developed, the owners corporation is responsible for certain maintenance and replacement costs associated with the underpass. Nobody at Martha Cove is arguing against replacing ageing lights with modern LEDs. The issue is the price residents are being asked to pay, how that price has been arrived at and whether this particular project properly falls within the obligations they are required to meet. The owners corporation was originally advised that 42 high-pressure sodium vapour lights and two fluorescent lights would be replaced with approximately 50 LED lights, at a total cost exceeding \$771,000. That is a significant cost on local households, especially during a cost-of-living crisis.

In correspondence dated 2 June 2025 the then Minister for Roads and Road Safety advised the owners corporation that 121 LED lights would instead be installed to meet the current design standards, more than double what was originally advised. At the time, they were told that because the works had been tendered among the Department of Transport and Planning's prequalified contractors the total project

cost was fixed and could not be reduced. The then minister's own correspondence repeatedly described this as an 'LED upgrade'. Residents quite reasonably question whether an upgrade is contemplated by an agreement which they understand requires them to meet maintenance and replacement costs. There is also the extraordinary situation that the lights specified by DTP do not qualify for support under the Victorian energy upgrades program because the department's requirements do not align with the program's criteria. Residents are being required to fund this upgrade while being excluded from the government's own scheme designed to support such upgrades. That is manifestly unfair. The owners corporation supports replacing ageing lighting. What it does not accept is that residents should simply be expected to meet the extraordinary bill without proper scrutiny of the scope, cost, basis under the section 173 agreement and available government support. The new minister should take a fresh look at this project and fix the mistake of his predecessor. Martha Cove residents should not be left carrying an unreasonable and avoidable financial burden.

Transport infrastructure

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (19:22): (1828) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is for the minister to visit the Alstom manufacturing facility in my electorate of Wendouree to meet with the skilled workers building Victoria's next generation of X'trapolis 2.0 trains and to see firsthand the important contribution they are making to Victoria's public transport network. The Carroll Labor government is continuing to build the transport system Victoria needs. We are removing level crossings, building new stations, upgrading roads and investing in better public transport across our state. Just last week the new Melton station opened to passengers, delivering a bigger, safer and more accessible station while also removing Melton's final two level crossings. And I would really like to thank the Ballarat passengers who were required to catch buses recently due to this disruption. Labor is also progressing future electrification works to support the growth of Melbourne's west and to separate the regional lines.

At the same time our Labor government is investing in local manufacturing and backing Victorian jobs, the workers at Alstom in Wendouree are building the X'trapolis 2.0 fleet that will help move millions of Victorians for decades to come. These highly skilled jobs support local families and strengthen Ballarat's proud manufacturing heritage. I proudly support local manufacturing and support local jobs. Families across my community rely on local manufacturing jobs, as does our local economy. The skilled workers at Alstom are building world-class trains right here in my community in Ballarat, creating opportunities for local workers and ensuring that the benefits of government investment stay in Victoria. But not everyone shares Labor's commitment to local manufacturing. The Liberals have proposed importing hybrid trains from overseas rather than backing Victorian-made trains built by Victorian workers. Their approach puts local jobs at risk and would deny communities like Ballarat the economic benefits that come from building trains in my community and in Victoria. I want trains made in Ballarat, not Barcelona. The difference is clear: Labor backs local manufacturing, local workers and local jobs. We build trains in Victoria and invest in skills and capabilities of our workforce. The Liberals want to send the work offshore and support manufacturing workers in Europe, not regional Victoria.

Responses

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Veterans) (19:25): I thank the member for Bulleen for his adjournment matter on behalf of Rotary Manningham City. I believe the issue relates to Rotary Manningham City's application for a grant under the Victoria Remembers program, which provides funding to various associations for projects that honour and commemorate the service of our veterans. On this application in particular, I would need to refer that on, but I believe the application was received a couple of weeks later from the closing date. As I said, I will refer it to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to investigate. I do want to add my thanks to Rotary Manningham City for their Anzac Day service. I know that they have been running this program for a very long time, which gives local primary and secondary students the opportunity to not only remember and

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commemorate Anzac Day with wreath-laying but, more importantly, remember the service and sacrifice of our veterans. So I will refer this matter.

In relation to other matters, a number of members raised matters for other ministers. I will refer those matters raised to the relevant ministers for a response.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house stands adjourned until tomorrow morning.

House adjourned 7:26 pm.