Hansard

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

60th Parliament

Tuesday 12 May 2026

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

Members of the Legislative Council

60th Parliament

President

Shaun Leane

Deputy President

Wendy Lovell

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Jaclyn Symes

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Lizzie Blandthorn

Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council

Bev McArthur (from 18 November 2025)
David Davis (from 27 December 2024)
Georgie Crozier (to 27 December 2024)

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council

Evan Mulholland (from 31 August 2023)
Matthew Bach (to 31 August 2023)

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Bach, Matthew[1]	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib	Luu, Trung	Western Metropolitan	Lib
Batchelor, Ryan	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Mansfield, Sarah	Western Victoria	Greens
Bath, Melina	Eastern Victoria	Nat	McArthur, Bev	Western Victoria	Lib
Berger, John	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	McCracken, Joe	Western Victoria	Lib
Blandthorn, Lizzie	Western Metropolitan	ALP	McGowan, Nick	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib
Bourman, Jeff	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	McIntosh, Tom	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Broad, Gaelle	Northern Victoria	Nat	Mulholland, Evan	Northern Metropolitan	Lib
Copsey, Katherine	Southern Metropolitan	Greens	Payne, Rachel	South-Eastern Metropolitan	LCV
Crozier, Georgie	Southern Metropolitan	Lib	Puglielli, Aiv	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Davis, David	Southern Metropolitan	Lib	Purcell, Georgie	Northern Victoria	AJP
Deeming, Moira[2]	Western Metropolitan	Ind	Ratnam, Samantha[5]	Northern Metropolitan	Greens
Erdogan, Enver	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Shing, Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Ermacora, Jacinta	Western Victoria	ALP	Somyurek, Adem[6]	Northern Metropolitan	Ind
Ettershank, David	Western Metropolitan	LCV	Stitt, Ingrid	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Galea, Michael	South-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Symes, Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Gray-Barberio, Anasina[3]	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Tarlamis, Lee	South-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Heath, Renee	Eastern Victoria	Lib	Terpstra, Sonja	North-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hermans, Ann-Marie	South-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib	Tierney, Gayle	Western Victoria	ALP
Leane, Shaun	North-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tyrrell, Rikkie-Lee	Northern Victoria	PHON
Limbrick, David[4]	South-Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Watt, Sheena	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Lovell, Wendy	Northern Victoria	Lib	Welch, Richard[7]	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib

[1] Resigned 7 December 2023
[2] Lib from 26 November 2022 to 28 March 2023
IndLib from 28 March 2023 to 27 December 2024
Lib from 27 December 2024 to 28 July 2026
[3] Appointed 14 November 2024
[4] LDP until 26 July 2023
[5] Resigned 8 November 2024
[6] DLP until 25 March 2024
[7] Appointed 7 February 2024

Party abbreviations

AJP – Animal Justice Party; ALP – Australian Labor Party; DLP – Democratic Labour Party;
Greens – Australian Greens; Ind – independent; IndLib – Independent Liberal; LCV – Legalise Cannabis Victoria;
LDP – Liberal Democratic Party; Lib – Liberal Party of Australia; LP – Libertarian Party;
Nat – National Party of Australia; PHON – Pauline Hanson's One Nation; SFFP – Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party

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Tuesday 12 May 2026

The PRESIDENT (Shaun Leane) took the chair at 12:02 pm, read the prayer and made an Acknowledgement of Country.

Bills

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Free TAFE Guarantee) Bill 2026

Electoral Amendment Bill 2025

Justice Legislation Further Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025

Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2026

Safe Food Victoria Bill 2026

Royal assent

The PRESIDENT (12:03): I have a message from the Governor, dated 14 April:

> The Governor informs the Legislative Council that she has, on this day, given the Royal Assent to the undermentioned Acts of the present Session presented to her by the Clerk of the Parliaments:
>
> **12/2026** Education and Training Reform Amendment (Free TAFE Guarantee) Act 2026
>
> **13/2026** Electoral Amendment Act 2026
>
> **14/2026** Justice Legislation Further Amendment (Miscellaneous) Act 2026
>
> **15/2026** Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Act 2026
>
> **16/2026** Safe Food Victoria Act 2026

Bev McArthur: President, I want to raise a point of order concerning the continued locking of the chamber and the apparent restriction on members' access to their workplace. I am not saying members should be permitted to misuse the chamber – dance on benches or, worse, damage property – or obstruct staff or bring the Parliament into disrepute, but that is not what happened here. This was about a video. The video in question was my video, which I was asked to remove and which seems to have caused the lockout. It included only a fleeting image of the chamber – for a matter of seconds, in fact – while I was walking and speaking normally. If the concern here is the mere appearance of the chamber in a member's communication, then that appears to be a new rule. If it is a new rule, members are clearly entitled to know where it is written, when it was made, who made it and whether it applies equally to all members. If it is not a written rule, then it should be not applied retrospectively or selectively or even applied at all. Parliament House is not a museum. I did ask for written rules.

The PRESIDENT: There should be limited words on a point of order, but keep going.

Bev McArthur: Thank you. I understand rules do exist for the broadcasting of proceedings, but that does not seem to cover usage outside the sittings. Members routinely need to use this chamber to walk through to gain access to other parts of the building for a start, and every member of the house, in regard to social media, communicates with constituents through social media. It is not a quirk or an oddity; it is the primary channel of our democratic communication. Using the chamber as a backdrop is important. It signals to constituents that their representatives are doing the work they were elected to do in the place where that work is done. It does convey legitimacy. If we are honest, the official proceedings of this house reach only a tiny fraction of the Victorian public, while social media reaches more.

President, are you going to continue to lock us out of our workplace or are you going to review your decision? I have pointed out to you that nearly everybody in this chamber has used this chamber as a backdrop for social media presentations. If we are not going to be allowed to do that, might I suggest you work through the Privileges Committee or wherever else – the Procedure Committee or the chamber committee or whatever bureaucracy decides how you use these buildings. I am sure there is

an important quango that is totally responsible for how everything happens here. So maybe have the meeting, have the committee presentation and give it to us in writing.

David Davis: Further to the point of order, President, I think not just Mrs McArthur and I are concerned but many others in the chamber are too. This is a restriction on the ability of MPs to do their work. It impedes their ability to appear in the chamber, to host groups through the chamber, to engage with constituents and to send messages out from the chamber in non-sitting periods. I would put it to you this is a direct article 9 matter. I do not know where this has originated from. If there is some clear mechanism that this has come forward from, that is one thing, and perhaps that could be explained. Apparently there is no obvious mechanism. I ask you to step back and rescind it.

The PRESIDENT: There is so much in that. I will take it on notice. I will just briefly say, though, Mrs McArthur, you feel like you have been victimised. That is not the case. When you replied to me I actually came back to you and said, 'You made a really fair call.' You sent me a number of other videos that were filmed in here, and I went, 'Fair cop. Leave yours up, because this has got away from us.' But I have got to say that this chamber is a place of debate, so if someone wants to make a political point in this chamber, there should be a right of reply for either side, whether it comes from this side or that side. If we get to the point that someone comes in here and just does a partisan video and sends it out with that backdrop when no-one knows they are doing it, it is a concern, and it has not happened before. I know we are all big influencers now. We are all influencers, right? I respect that, but some of our electorates – all of our electorates – are hundreds of square metres –

A member: Kilometres.

The PRESIDENT: Kilometres, sorry – hundreds of square kilometres. There are heaps of places to do your influencing. There are only a few months left. Mrs McArthur, if you get elected as the next President, you can let it go – open slather – so anyone can come in here and gob off about anything at any time and have the backdrop of democracy there.

David Davis: President, hasn't this been for more than a hundred years?

The PRESIDENT: I am trying to talk. It has not been for a hundred years. There has not been video – there have not been people filming in here. Since when did that happen? Good interjection.

David Davis: Very good interjection.

The PRESIDENT: Excellent interjection there – good for you. I will take it on notice. Once again, I do not see why people feel that they need to be doing their partisan videos in this chamber when they have got the whole state. If there is a new President in a couple of months, they can go open slather. If people want to move a notice of motion, I am all for the will of the house. If people want to move a notice of motion that anyone can do any partisan thing and have a crack at anyone in here when they are not in here, when the idea is that we are supposed to be having a debate, we will do that. I will take it on notice. Thank you for that comprehensive point of order.

Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

Introduction and first reading

The PRESIDENT (12:12): I have received the following message from the Legislative Assembly:

> The Legislative Assembly presents for the agreement of the Legislative Council a Bill for an Act to amend the **Road Safety Act 1986**, the **Heavy Vehicle National Law Application Act 2013**, the **Road Management Act 2004**, the **EastLink Project Act 2004**, the **Melbourne City Link Act 1995**, the **North East Link Act 2020**, the **West Gate Tunnel (Truck Bans and Traffic Management) Act 2019**, the **Port Management Act 1995**, the **Marine Safety Act 2010**, the **Rail Management Act 1996** and the **Transport Integration Act 2010** and for other purposes.

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts) (12:13): I move:

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Jaclyn SYMES: I move, by leave:

That the second reading be taken forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

Statement of compatibility

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts) (12:13): I lay on the table a statement of compatibility with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the **Charter**), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 (the **Bill**).

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

Overview of the Bill

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- amend the *Road Safety Act 1986* (the **Act**) to provide for the use of point to point average speed limit enforcement in Victoria, to include its use on roads with multiple speed limits and to clarify its use on a network of roads or where temporary speed limits are in place;
- to amend the *Heavy Vehicle National Law Application Act 2013* in relation to emergency services exemptions from certain fatigue management requirements;
- to amend the *Road Management Act 2004* to provide for the temporary declaration of roads by the Head, Transport for Victoria;
- to amend toll road legislation to transfer functions from the Secretary to the Department of Transport and Planning to the Head, Transport for Victoria and to make minor and technical amendments to that legislation;
- to amend the *Port Management Act 1995* in relation to information gathering and charges; and
- to make other minor and technical amendments to the *Road Safety Act 1986* and other Acts.

Human rights issues

The following rights are relevant to the Bill:

- right to freedom of movement (s 12); and
- right to be presumed innocent (s 25(1)).

Right to freedom of movement

Section 12 of the Charter provides that every person lawfully within Victoria has the right to move freely within Victoria, to enter and leave Victoria, and to choose where to live in Victoria. The right extends, generally, to movement without impediment throughout the State, and a right of access to places and services used by members of the public, subject to compliance with regulations legitimately made in the public interest. The right does not extend to any positive obligation on the State to promote freedom of movement.

Clause 30 of the Bill inserts new Division 1A into the *Road Management Act 2004* (RM Act) and new s 16A which allows the Head, Transport for Victoria, to make a temporary declaration of road in certain circumstances, including if the road is already open to the public and the Head, Transport for Victoria, believes that it is in the interests of the public for the road to be immediately opened to the public. The temporary road declaration may be for a period of no more than a year, with one further extension of up to a year allowed by new s 16C. New s 16E provides that once a temporary road declaration expires or is revoked, the road the subject of the declaration is taken to have been discontinued in accordance with s 12. Section 16E(3) then

provides that for the avoidance of doubt, s 10 of the RM Act applies to a road discontinued under that section, and the rights of the public under that Act or at common law in relation to a public highway created by the temporary road declaration are extinguished.

The making of a temporary road declaration promotes freedom of movement by enabling the public to access roads more quickly and is intended to grant use of a road while administrative processes are still being undertaken. While it is intended that a temporary road declaration would be followed by a permanent road declaration under s 11 of the Act, such that relevant rights in respect of a public highway remain, there may be rare circumstances in which a temporary road declaration does expire or is revoked and the road is discontinued. This will result in members of the public having any residual rights in relation to a public highway under the RM Act and the common law extinguished, including the ability to access and travel on that road. This in turn is relevant to the right to freedom of movement, given the practical effect of this statutory provision is to inhibit a person's right to freely moving along that road. However, as the later extinguishment of public highway rights occurs in the context where such rights were temporarily conferred, in my view, the removal of a temporary benefit that is intended to be time-limited does not in itself constitute a limit to the right to freedom of movement.

However, to the extent the right is limited, I am of the view that any limit is reasonable and justified in the circumstances, given the purpose of the temporary road declaration is to open a road to the public where there is an urgent need, and it is in the public interest, but various administrative processes have not yet been completed, for example the required consents from Ministers or municipal councils and relevant road authorities have not been received or the boundaries of the road have not yet been fully determined. The circumstances in which a temporary road declaration is not made permanent, and the public's rights in relation to a public highway are extinguished, would be rare, and would have a legitimate purpose such as public safety. The application of s 10 of the RM Act and the extinguishment of common law rights and rights under the RM Act is the current position when a road ceases to be a road, so clause 30 of the Bill does not alter the status quo in this regard. Finally, any limit on the right to freedom movement would be minimal, with road users able to find alternative routes to continue to move freely around Victoria.

Accordingly, I am satisfied that clause 30 is compatible with the Charter.

Right to be presumed innocent

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

Reasonable excuse defences

Clause 50 of the Bill inserts new ss 91AAB and 91AAD into the *Port Management Act 1995*. New s 91AAB provides that an owner of a cargo vessel that loads or unloads cargo at a prescribed commercial trading port must provide prescribed shipping information to Ports Victoria within a specific timeframe – failure to do so without reasonable excuse is an offence. Similarly, new s 91AAD of the Bill provides that an operator of a prescribed terminal within the port of Melbourne must provide prescribed information, relating to container trucks accessing the terminal, to the Secretary to the Department of Transport and Planning within a specific time and in specified form, and failure to do so without reasonable excuse constitutes an offence.

By creating a 'reasonable excuse' exception, these offences place an evidential burden on the accused, in that they require the accused to raise evidence of a reasonable excuse, which is relevant to the right to be presumed innocent. However, in doing so, this offence does not transfer the legal burden of proof. Once the accused has pointed to evidence of a reasonable excuse, which will ordinarily be peculiarly within their knowledge, the burden shifts back to the prosecution to prove the essential elements of the offence. The Supreme Court has held that an evidential onus of this kind does not limit the right to be presumed innocent.

Accordingly, I consider clause 50 is compatible with the Charter.

Evidentiary presumptions

A number of clauses in the Bill contain a presumption that in the absence of evidence to the contrary, certain evidence amounts to proof of certain facts. The presumptions are relevant to the right to be presumed innocent because they facilitate the prosecution to establish the elements of an offence without being required to prove certain necessary facts to the legal standard, and place an onus on an accused to raise contrary evidence before a prosecution is required to prove these matters.

Point to point speed averaging

Part 2 of the Bill relates to point to point speed averaging for speeding offences in the Act or the *Road Safety Road Rules 2017*. Clause 7 inserts new ss 65AB and 65AC into the Act.

Section 65AB makes it an offence for a driver to exceed the average speed limit on the total length of road between two detection points, which is determined by a mathematical formula prescribed by new s 65AC. Several clauses of the Bill, such as 5, 6 and 13–20, amend the definitions of various offence provisions in the Act, or provisions that provide for specific sanctions such as immediate licence suspension, to include the offence of 'exceeding the average speed limit', so that such an offence is covered by these provisions.

New s 78AA inserted by clause 9 then provides that in proceedings for an offence against ss 64 or 65AB(1) of the Act, where the average speed at which a motor vehicle or trailer travelled is relevant, and where the prosecution relies on the average speed of the motor vehicle or trailer between two detection points on a total length of road, the average speed calculated in accordance with the mathematical formula in new s 78AA is evidence of the average speed at which the motor vehicle or trailer travelled, in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

New s 79B inserted by clause 11 of the Bill provides that where the speed limit applying to the length of road on which the motor vehicle or trailer travelled is indicated by a variable speed limit sign, and where the speed or average speed at which a motor vehicle or trailer travelled along the length of road is relevant, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the speed limit indicated by the variable speed limit sign on that occasion is proof of the speed limit that applies to the driver. If it is not practicable to determine the speed limit indicated by the variable speed limit sign on the relevant occasion, the speed limit is the greater of the speed limit that would normally apply to that length of road, or the maximum speed limit displayed by the variable speed limit sign at any time.

Clause 11 of the Bill also inserts new s 79C, which deems that a certificate issued by the Head, Transport for Victoria that certifies the maximum speed limit and indicated by a variable speed limit sign that applies to a length of road, is proof in any proceeding, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, of the facts and matters contained in it, namely the maximum speed limit. New s 79D, also inserted into the Act by clause 11 of the Bill, provides that in any criminal proceeding where the fact that a motor vehicle or trailer was present at a detection point on any occasion is relevant, evidence of that fact as indicated or determined on the relevant occasion by a prescribed road safety camera or an image or message produced by a prescribed road safety camera or by a prescribed process, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, is proof of the fact that the motor vehicle or trailer was present at the detection point on that occasion.

Division 2 of Part 2 of the Bill amends the *Heavy Vehicle National Law Application Act 2013* to also adopt similar changes in relation to point to point speed averaging in certain circumstances. For example, clause 24 inserts new s 32A which deems as fact (in the absence of evidence to the contrary) the average speed at which a heavy vehicle was travelling, as being the average speed the heavy vehicle was travelling on a length of road between two detection points, as determined by the mathematical formula outlined in subsection (3). Clause 26 inserts ss 34A and 34B which concern evidence of speed limits and maximum speed limits being indicated by a variable speed limit sign, and inserts new s 34C which deems as fact that a heavy vehicle was present at a detection point on any occasion where its presence was indicated by a prescribed road safety camera or an image or messaged produced by a prescribed road safety camera or by a prescribed process.

Analysis

These provisions are relevant to the presumption of innocence as they deem a fact to be proved in the absence of contrary evidence, and thus reduce the prosecution's burden to prove an accused's guilt.

To the extent that such deeming provisions limit this right, I consider any limits to be reasonably justified. These offences are important to upholding road safety and preventing public harm, with point to point speed averaging encouraging consistent, safer driving over long distances (rather than at specific, known camera locations). The deeming provisions are essential to facilitating the prosecution of such offences due to the evidentiary, logistical and legal difficulties of proving an average speed over a long distance or establishing the veracity of a camera image using traditional, manual evidence. These provisions also allow for the efficient prosecution of high volume offences that would otherwise overwhelm the court system if they required full and manual technical evidence to establish the veracity of every record produced by the cameras.

Further, these provisions allow an accused to challenge the evidence being deemed. Once a person has adduced some evidence to the contrary of the assumed fact, the burden of proof shifts to the prosecution to prove the necessary facts comprising the elements of the offence. Further, these provisions relate to the enforcement of offences to which it is appropriate to attach deeming provisions, being strict liability road safety offences, which are regulatory in nature, carry little stigma and a low prescribed penalty – and relate to maintaining the safe and orderly operation of the roads.

I am therefore of the view that these evidentiary presumption provisions are compatible with the right to be presumed innocent under s 25(1) of the Charter.

The Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn MP
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Disability

Second reading

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts) (12:13): I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Ordered that second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*:

Overview

The Government continues to improve Victoria's vast transport network for today and the years ahead. We are focussed on embedding a strong culture of road safety and improving the effective management of roads across our state. We are also committed to supporting an efficient, safe and sustainable ports and freight transport system that enhances Victoria's economic prosperity and liveability. This Bill will amend the *Road Safety Act 1986* to enable the expansion of point-to-point average speed enforcement to improve road safety outcomes and reduce the number of lives lost. The Bill will also amend the *Road Management Act 2004* to introduce new powers to temporarily declare a road to provide certainty around road authority functions and responsibilities. This Bill will also implement key actions from the Victorian Freight Plan and make permanent existing temporary exemptions for Victorian emergency services under the Heavy Vehicle National Law. This Bill will also deliver technical amendments, improved processes and better administrative outcomes across a range of transport legislation.

Road safety reforms

In Victoria, speeding contributes to at least 30 per cent of road fatalities and a quarter of serious injuries sustained by light vehicle occupants each year. That is why the Victorian Government continues to support actions to improve road safety outcomes in line with the *Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021–30*. This includes implementing better speed management practices to encourage safer driver behaviour by using stronger and smarter enforcement practices.

The Bill amends the *Road Safety Act 1986* to enable the expansion of point-to-point average speed enforcement to allow enforcement in high-risk, high-speed scenarios along lengths of road where there are multiple speed limits. Point-to-point average speed is based on a calculation of a vehicle's average speed between two known, fixed points known as detection points. Point-to-point average speed enforcement is currently used in a number of locations in Victoria, however the existing formula in the Road Safety Act for calculating a vehicle's average speed is limited in that the speed limit between the two detection points needs to be the same across the entire length of road. This prevents average speed enforcement being used along lengths of road (or networks of roads) where there is more than one speed limit.

To overcome this limitation, the Bill amends the *Road Safety Act* to enable point-to-point average speed enforcement across multiple speed zones. The Bill introduces new formulas for both calculating the average speed limit that applies between two detection points that span different speed zones and calculating the average speed of a vehicle that has travelled between those two points. The Bill also introduces a new offence to the *Road Safety Act 1986* that a driver of a motor vehicle must not drive in a manner so that the average speed of the vehicle (as calculated) exceeds the average speed limit (as calculated) that applies on the total length of road between those specific detection points.

In some cases where temporary speed limits apply, for example, where a temporary speed sign is used for road works, the reduced speed limit would be disregarded and the maximum speed limit for that section of road would be the speed limit for the purposes of calculating a vehicle's average speed. Temporarily reduced speed limits could still be enforced through existing methods of detecting a vehicle's speed at a point in time, either by road safety cameras or by Victoria Police members.

The Government is also making changes to address concerns about the use of the operator onus scheme and to ensure responsible drivers are held accountable for their actions. The Bill amends the *Road Safety Act 1986* to ensure that it will be acceptable to use an Australian or overseas residential address when describing a person nominated in a statement. Under the operator onus scheme, the operator of the vehicle is held responsible for an offence unless that operator nominates the person who was driving the vehicle at the time of the offence. Currently, a home address for the responsible driver must be included in a nomination statement, which is defined in the *Road Safety Act 1986* as "the person's residential address or place of abode

in Australia". This definition has enabled some authorities to refuse to accept nominations with overseas drivers addresses, which goes against the intention of the operator onus nature of these offences. The Bill amends the *Road Safety Act 1986* to replace the reference to home address with residential address to ensure that it will be acceptable to use an Australian or overseas residential address when describing a person nominated in a statement. Similar amendments are proposed to the *Melbourne City Link Act 1995*, the *Eastlink Project Act 2004*, the *West Gate Tunnel (Truck Bans and Traffic Management) Act 2019*, the *North East Link Act 2020* and the *Marine Safety Act 2010*.

To support this change, the Government will also amend the Road Safety (General) Regulations 2019 to require the provision of additional points of identification, for example, a passport number, where nomination statements are provided with an overseas address. This is intended to ease the burden on councils in locating and recovering infringement amounts from overseas drivers. In addition, the Bill amends the *Road Safety Act 1986* to adjust the period in which proceedings may commence for an offence of providing false or misleading information in statements provided to enforcement officials, including nomination statements. It can take a significant length of time to detect false statements made under the operator onus scheme, particularly where statements nominate a driver whose residential address is overseas. The Bill addresses this by extending the time to commence proceedings for this offence from 24 months to 3 years.

Road management reforms

The Government is making improvements to ensure new roads can be effectively managed as soon as they are ready. There is often considerable pressure to open a road to the public once the construction phase reaches completion but before they have been formally declared to be roads under the *Road Management Act 2004*. As a result, roads are being used by the public without any road authority functions being formally assigned under that Act.

Road declarations require the completion of a number of steps, including negotiating and completing the acquisition of land in situations where not all of the land in the new road reserve is already owned by the state government. Further, accurate survey plans need to be undertaken by licensed surveyors and these cannot be done until construction of the road is mostly complete. This is due to the exact boundaries of the road, including key structures such as bridges, not being known until late in the construction process. For these reasons, it is often not possible to declare roads under the Road Management Act before they are open to the public.

The Bill amends the *Road Management Act 2004* to provide the Head, Transport for Victoria (HTfV) with a special power to temporarily declare and classify a road so that road authority responsibilities can be assigned while a full and permanent road declaration is still pending. This assignment of road authority responsibilities ensures there is an entity with legal responsibility for key functions such as the inspection, maintenance and repair of the new road. The assignment of a road authority for a new road that is being used by traffic also helps to address issues around liability in the event of incidents.

Implementing the Victorian Freight Plan

In 2025, the Victorian Government released *The Victorian Freight Plan 2025–30: Victoria Delivers* – the Government's plan to meet the challenge of higher freight volumes as Victoria's population continues to grow and our demand for freight continues to increase. The vision for the plan is to protect and strengthen Victoria's competitive advantage, to enhance Victoria's liveability and economic prosperity. The plan outlines the high-level objectives, strategic priority areas and the actions that will be taken to deliver on the objectives over the next five years to support thriving freight and supply chains in Victoria. Two of the actions call for improved data sharing between Government and industry to support the performance and transparency of Victoria's ports system. These two actions are addressed in this Bill.

The first action relates to improved oversight of port precinct truck activity. The Bill amends the *Port Management Act 1995* to require operators of prescribed terminals within the Port of Melbourne (stevedoring businesses) to collect prescribed information on trucks and truck activity to and from facilities and to share this information with the Department of Transport and Planning. The information is likely to include registration plate numbers, engine details, fuel type, vehicle age, frequency of access to the prescribed terminal and the quantity of containers collected and/or delivered. Stevedoring businesses already collect a range of information relating to the vehicle, and this new measure will build on this existing system. Failure to provide this information will be an offence, as will intentionally providing false or misleading information. This new requirement aims to improve the efficiency of truck activity in the area of the port and support policy development.

The second action relates to improved container shipping information. The Bill amends the *Port Management Act 1995* to insert a new provision requiring the owner of a cargo vessel that berths in a prescribed commercial port to supply prescribed information to the Department of Transport and Planning in accordance with the prescribed time, format and delivery method to be set out in regulations. The information is likely to include

details of the characteristics, content, origin and destination of shipping containers. Failure to supply this information will be an offence, as will intentionally providing false or misleading information. At present, shipping companies operating across Victoria's commercial ports provide container shipping information to Ports Victoria, container stevedoring terminal operators, and other entities along the freight supply chain, but the form of the information provided is not always consistent, creating inefficiencies in the supply chain. The new requirement will provide for consistent electronic container shipping information, which will be made available to industry. This measure aims to support more efficient movement of containers through the supply chain and further targeted policy development where needed.

Heavy Vehicle National Law exemptions

The Bill amends the *Heavy Vehicle National Law Application Act 2013* to make permanent existing time-limited exemptions for emergency services from fatigue management requirements.

Victorian emergency services are currently exempt from some fatigue management record-keeping requirements under the Heavy Vehicle National Law. These exemptions are currently provided by a time-limited notice issued by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

To provide ongoing clarity and certainty, and to reduce burden on volunteers, the Bill amends the Heavy Vehicle National Law Application Act 2013 (Vic) to make these exemptions permanent in Victorian legislation.

Other amendments to improve processes

The Bill also makes other process and administrative amendments to improve the clarity and operation of these key pieces of transport legislation. These amendments include changes to the *Road Safety Act 1986* to reflect recent updates to the Road Safety Road Rules 2017 related to the wearing of seat belts and the need for passengers in vehicles to not occupy the same seating position. There are also changes to the *Rail Management Act 1996* to remove a requirement to consult when maximum rail access prices are maintained or increased by no more than the Consumer Price Index. The Bill also amends the *Port Management Act 1995* to clarify where and when local port managers can charge commercial rates of fees.

Other minor and technical governance changes include amendments to toll road legislation to update delegation requirements, allow toll road operators to execute a deed without the use of an official seal, remove redundant road management provisions and transfer administrative functions from the Secretary to the Head, Transport for Victoria. These amendments relate to the *North East Link Act 2020, Melbourne City Link Act 1995, EastLink Project Act 2004, and West Gate Tunnel (Truck Bans and Traffic Management) Act 2019*, as well as the *Transport Integration Act 2010*.

Conclusion

This Bill reflects the Victorian Government's continued commitment to improving our transport network and reinforcing Victoria's position as the freight and logistics centre of Australia. The Bill will improve road safety outcomes and the management of Victoria's roads, implement actions from the Victorian Freight Plan, and deliver improved processes and administrative outcomes across a range of transport legislation.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (12:13): I move:

That debate be adjourned for one week.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned for one week.

Committees

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Membership

The PRESIDENT (12:13): I advise the house that I have received a letter from Richard Welch resigning from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee effective 11 May 2026.

House Committee

Membership

The PRESIDENT (12:14): I further advise the house that I have received a letter from Ingrid Stitt resigning from the House Committee effective 12 May 2026.

Members

Ministry

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts) (12:14): Before we start today I would like to inform the chamber that there have been changes to the ministry, the full details of which, including the general orders, have been communicated to the Parliament and are available to members. If that is satisfactory, I do not propose to go into any greater detail.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Public lottery licence

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:14): (1309) My question is to the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. Minister, the Premier has said the Lottery Corporation's 40-year lottery licence award was dealt with through a full and open process, but the Lottery Corporation and its own lawyers have said it followed exclusive bilateral negotiations. Which description is correct, Minister?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Environment, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:15): I thank Mrs McArthur for her question, for her interest in my casino, gaming and liquor regulation portfolio and for giving me the opportunity to outline how we have delivered the highest price ever paid for an Australian lottery licence in the history of this nation. I am proud of the agreement we have reached, an agreement that brings us into line with other jurisdictions in terms of having a 40-year contract and extension for a licence of this kind for a public lottery, which is a longstanding, lower risk and highly regulated part of Victoria's gambling system.

In relation to those comments, I can confirm to the chamber that the government undertook a comprehensive licensing and market assessment process supported by detailed commercial advice.

Michael Galea interjected.

Enver ERDOGAN: That was a point of order, I thought, that was called. No? Mr Galea, thank you for your interjection.

That process included market sounding and assessment of domestic and international industry participants. We were supported by commercial advice. That meant looking at who was capable within the international and domestic market to be able to deliver these services, understanding that the TattsLotto corporation has been doing this work in Victoria since 1954. Following that process the best value for Victorians was achieved through a negotiation with the existing licence holder, and that is consistent with an approach that has been taken in other jurisdictions.

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:16): Thank you, Minister. That was hardly an answer. But if you are saying, as you sort of half suggested, that this was a full and open process, will you now table the registration-of-interest, tender or market-testing documents?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Environment, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:17): I thank Mrs McArthur for her question in relation to this matter. Mrs McArthur, you would well understand that many of these documents are commercial in confidence, and I do not intend to waive any legal privilege either. These are important contracts for good reason, because they are an integrity risk. This is an ASX-listed company we are talking about and an important agreement about extracting value for our state – value that will be reinvested in services that there will be less of under Jess. Let us be clear: this will be reinvested into services that Victorians rely on.

Wendy Lovell: On a point of order, President, I think the minister may want to correct his first answer. I think he referred to the TattsLotto corporation. TattsLotto is not a corporation; TattsLotto is merely a game. It was initiated by Tattersall's but is now run by the Lottery Corporation.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order.

Outdoor Recreation Victoria

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (12:18): (1310) My question is for the new Minister for Outdoor Recreation – congratulations, Minister. On the opening weekend of the 2017 duck-shooting season almost 300 protected birds were illegally killed in front of Game Management Authority officers, with close to a thousand more wounded or discarded. After arresting some rescuers, the GMA went home. I and other volunteers were still collecting bodies after sunset. The Andrews government commissioned an independent review into GMA's failings. The findings were damning: the GMA was neither impartial nor independent, noncompliance was widespread and the agency focused more on penalising rescuers than enforcing animal welfare. Most critically, the review found that the GMA was too comfortable with hunting organisations and warned that combining promotion and regulation undermines credibility. Minister, how do you justify creating a new agency that legislates this very conflict of interest after being explicitly warned of the dangers of doing so?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Environment, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:19): I thank Ms Purcell for her question – a really important question – and her longstanding interest in these matters. From the outset I do want to state the importance of the work that the Game Management Authority does. We know that Victoria has a long history and tradition of recreational hunting and a government that recognises that duck hunting is an important and legitimate outdoor activity that should be done safely, sustainably and of course in accordance with the law. In relation to that, I do want to acknowledge my predecessor Minister Dimopoulos for the work he undertook – challenging work, important work – to strike the right balance and commit to ensuring we can improve the outdoor experience for all Victorians, whether that be in the hunting sphere or whether that be in the fishing sphere. That is why our government's commitment to outdoor recreation will be seen and will be debated in this chamber shortly through the introduction of new legislation.

But I do understand your concerns. I think there is always a challenge with being a regulator but also having key powers to approve actions as well. Having approval powers and enforcement powers can be, at times, a conflict. It is about how organisations manage that conflict. As a minister, I have noticed that is quite common across agencies, whether it be at Parks Victoria or whether it be at the EPA. There are a lot of roles that they play where they are in charge of approvals but are also in charge of enforcement. These are not conflicts that cannot be managed. They can be, and it is my expectation that the organisation has that in place – obviously subject to the legislative process. I do not want to pre-empt debate in this chamber, because –

Georgie Purcell: On a point of order, President, my question was specifically in relation to the promotion of hunting. The GMA does not currently have that power. So I am not referring to approvals and compliance; I am referring to the fact that they will now promote hunting, which they do not currently do.

The PRESIDENT: The minister to continue.

Enver ERDOGAN: I think the goal of Outdoor Recreation Victoria is to improve the experience for Victorians so they can get outdoors more. Whether it be hunting, fishing, rock climbing or many other activities that people like in our great outdoors, I think it is important that we promote them as healthy alternatives. As a government, some of our best programs have been in this space – from little anglers to the investments we have made across the board to improve the experience. I think that is an important role. It is like how our Department of Health promotes healthier lifestyles and healthier living.

I think a lot of agencies have similar roles. I think it is important they do this work. I think, whether it be hunting or any other outdoor recreation, these are legitimate activities that we should be supporting.

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (12:21): Thank you, Minister, for your response. I know you are new to the portfolio, but my question was specifically about how it is justified and how it will be managed. We can explore that more when the bill comes to Parliament. The Pegasus report found that even the GMA's own staff lacked confidence in the agency's ability to enforce hunting laws or hold offenders accountable, prompting the minister at the time to refuse ruling out shutting them down entirely. Soon after, the GMA's manager of compliance, a former homicide detective, resigned, claiming the agency was unwilling to properly investigate illegal behaviour and lacked the capacity to effectively regulate hunters. In his resignation he stated that his attempts to pursue investigations were blocked and that he had been directed not to refer to animal cruelty or the code of practice in enforcement matters. Given that the government has confirmed that all Game Management Authority jobs will transfer to Outdoor Recreation Victoria, can the minister advise whether compliance roles will be reduced or whether staff currently regulating hunting will instead be responsible for promoting it?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Environment, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:23): I thank Ms Purcell for that supplementary question. Of course, subject to the passage of the legislation, there will be no job losses as part of this process. The goal is to keep the expertise and retain the skills and experience that exist in both the organisations. There will be opportunities to work in this field and to promote the outdoor activities that this government has invested in, whether it be piers and boating opportunities or whether it be in all our parks and gardens across our state. So there will be opportunities. Our goal is to retain staff that are experienced in this field. But I think that the new organisational structure, once we have a CEO and that process proceeds, will be up to the new leadership of the new organisation to work out. I understand that this merger will have to be staged, because at the moment they have quite separate roles, and this is a merger of two entities. That will be teased out, and I look forward to the passage of the legislation and getting on with the role of setting up Outdoor Recreation Victoria. I look forward to seeing you all out there.

Ministers statements: ambulance services

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (12:24): Violence against any worker is unacceptable, and violence against any paramedic is inexcusable. Every single day thousands of Victorian paramedics put their lives on the line to provide world-class care and expertise to people in their hours of greatest need and when they are at their most vulnerable. We will keep investing in a range of initiatives and supports, partnering with Ambulance Victoria, paramedics and their union to make sure that we understand the risks, needs, resources and supports that paramedics deserve to help them to do their work every day. Their world-class care and expertise deserve respect. So when you call for help and when you let them into your home and into your life because you need their help, please provide them with this respect.

Our laws must be as strong as possible to make sure our hardworking paramedics get home safely every single day. Victorians know that the coalition has no interest in protecting emergency care workers. They voted against industrial manslaughter legislation, they cut emergency services, they took a billion dollars out of our health system and they have no interest in helping workers to return home safely. It was the coalition that introduced laws in 2014 that were riddled with holes. We began fixing them in 2018 and 2020; it is 2026, and we are still finding loopholes. We are not going to keep playing legislative whack-a-mole. That is why we are sending this to the Victorian Law Reform Commission to get comprehensive advice on the changes that are needed – the definition of 'on duty', which demands clarification. Unlike those opposite, we actually speak to our workforce, and the message is clear: our paramedics deserve to be supported every single day, beyond the law. That is why this budget builds on a range of measures to support our system to alleviate pressures. The Victorian Virtual Emergency Department's standards and $50.7 million – *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: I acknowledge in the gallery a former member of this chamber, Mr Cliff Hayes.

Public lottery licence

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:26): (1311) My question is to the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. Minister, did you seek advice as to whether the Lottery Corporation or any of its subsidiaries made any donation to the Australian Labor Party before approving the exclusive licence renewal?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Environment, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:26): The short answer is no, as that is not a relevant consideration.

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:27): Minister, there is nothing more relevant than donations to the Labor Party when you then award them things. Can you explain to the house why Victorians should have confidence in the integrity of a process where a 40-year monopoly worth over $1 billion was awarded to a Labor Party donor without a public tender?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Environment, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:27): I thank Mrs McArthur for her supplementary question. Mrs McArthur, let me be very clear: the licensing process was overseen by an independent probity adviser and an independent review panel appointed under the Gambling Regulation Act. Any allegations of that nature should be referred. If you have any allegations of anything, you should put them to the appropriate integrity agencies. But what I will say is they are not relevant considerations. In fact I can confirm that I was not even aware of that until the public reporting, to be frank, because it is not a relevant consideration in any of these matters. We followed advice. We made sure those independent probity advisers were in place as per the legislation to make sure this process was handled in the best way possible so we could capture the most value possible for our state.

Voluntary assisted dying

Rachel PAYNE (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (12:28): (1312) My question is for the Minister for Ageing, Minister Stitt. Recent reporting outlines that terminally ill residents in aged care are being denied access to information on voluntary assisted dying options. This is alarming considering voluntary assisted dying was made legal in Victoria in 2019 and providers are required by law federally to provide access to this information. Additionally, a new report by Go Gentle Australia reveals that many Australian aged care providers are failing to support their residents' end-of-life choices. My question is: what steps is the government taking to ensure that aged care providers in Victoria legally provide patients with information on voluntary assisted dying?

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Government Services, Special Minister of State, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Multicultural and Multifaith Victoria) (12:29): I thank Ms Payne for her important question. At the outset I do want to note that under the general order the VAD legislation is the responsibility of Minister Shing as the health minister, but I am happy to talk about specifically the aged care elements of your question.

Obviously it is incredibly important that all aged care providers uphold residents' rights and preferences. And if they seek access to information regarding voluntary assisted dying rights here in Victoria – I think this actually came up a little bit in the debates both in the Legislative Assembly and in this place during the recent amendments to the VAD legislation – the Department of Health has published guidance for aged care providers which makes it very clear that providers should not obstruct or unnecessarily delay a person's access to VAD. The guidance also sets out expectations that providers consider voluntary assisted dying as part of their end-of-life care planning and make their policies available to residents and prospective residents. Where a provider is unable to provide that

information, there is an expectation under that guidance that the individual resident is referred to the VAD navigators, which – as you would be familiar with – is a statewide program. In terms of our public sector aged care facilities, all public sector residential aged care services are required to have policies and pathways in place that are about supporting best practice and that are not obstructing anyone's access to voluntary assisted dying.

Rachel PAYNE (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (12:31): I thank the minister for her response, noting that I was also a little confused as to portfolios. But focusing specifically on the providers, despite Victoria having the first voluntary assisted dying laws, our aged care sector is the worst in the country at providing information, with 90 per cent of them providing no information about voluntary assisted dying policies. Despite being the first, we are in fact the worst. So by way of supplementary: how is the government going to improve the current oversight of aged care facilities to ensure they respect the rights of their residents to access voluntary assisted dying in their homes?

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Government Services, Special Minister of State, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Multicultural and Multifaith Victoria) (12:31): I thank Ms Payne for her supplementary question. I think we actually went to these exact issues during the VAD debate, and at the time the then health minister indicated that she would work with –

Georgie Crozier interjected.

Ingrid STITT: Sorry, the former minister Mary-Anne Thomas indicated that she would continue to work with me as ageing minister and the department to make sure that what I have just outlined is actually happening on the ground. I am sure that I will be able to have the same conversations with the new minister, Minister Shing, as we make sure that the dignity and the rights of our aged care residents are front of mind when it comes to what we expect particularly our public sector aged care providers to be across to be able to provide that critical information to residents that request it.

Ministers statements: Mental Health Tribunal

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Government Services, Special Minister of State, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Multicultural and Multifaith Victoria) (12:33): I rise to talk to the house about the incredibly important role that the Mental Health Tribunal plays in protecting the rights and dignity of people with mental illness. The role of the tribunal is to decide whether patients need compulsory mental health treatment and to identify the least restrictive way people can receive the treatment that they need. I would like to acknowledge the staff and members of the tribunal and the extremely important role that they play in the wider mental health system.

The commencement of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 in September 2023 brought important reforms to provide for more frequent oversight by the tribunal when it comes to community treatment orders. This reform promotes voluntary treatment in preference to compulsory treatment wherever possible and requires that mental health and wellbeing care is provided with the least possible restriction of people's rights, dignity and autonomy. Following legislation being passed last year – which I do note was broadly supported in the chamber, including by those opposite – the Mental Health Tribunal will take on the functions of the Forensic Leave Panel later this year. That is why we have invested $3.5 million in the 2026–27 budget to support operations of the Mental Health Tribunal. So I was quite shocked to see that Jess Wilson plans cuts to the Mental Health Tribunal, which would only seek to limit the tribunal's ability to protect the rights and dignity of people with mental illness and fulfil its statutory obligations. It is on the hit list. This follows last year's policy proposal from the Victorian Young Liberals to reopen and mandate mental health asylums. Only the Allan Labor government can be trusted to support the critical work of the Mental Health Tribunal and protect the human rights and dignity of people accessing our mental health system here in Victoria.

Public lottery licence

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:35): (1313) My question is to the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. Minister, what advice did the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission provide to you as minister on the 40-year licence extension?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Environment, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:35): I thank Mrs McArthur for her question and interest in this matter. Mrs McArthur, you would appreciate that public lotteries have been a longstanding, low-risk and tightly regulated part of our Victorian gambling system since 1954, when the Lottery Corporation first delivered gambling services and products in Victoria. Under governments of all persuasions since they have been providing this service. Our extension brings us into line with other jurisdictions that have signed 40-year agreements – South Australia and New South Wales.

Evan Mulholland: On a point of order, President, the question simply went to what advice the VGCCC provided to the minister, and he has not yet reached the answer.

The PRESIDENT: The minister has still got 2½ minutes, so I will let him continue.

Enver ERDOGAN: I will just inform the chamber of the normal process for these sorts of agreements, appreciating that those opposite have been out of government for a long time. These are long agreements, and we do this work well in advance. But in relation to the advice, a lot of it is commercial in confidence, understanding that we are dealing with a publicly listed company. There are laws against releasing some of that information, and some of it is legally privileged, which I do not intend on waiving.

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:36): Minister, the Lottery Corporation was the only party allowed in the room, so are you satisfied that all probity requirements under the Gambling Regulation Act were met, notwithstanding that no competitive process was conducted?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Environment, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:37): The short answer is yes. The process was overseen by the independent probity adviser and independent review panel appointed under the Gambling Regulation Act.

Ambulance services

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:37): (1314) My question is to the Minister for Ambulance Services. Minister, Ava is 14 years old and was injured playing football on 26 April. She sustained breaks to her lower femur and upper tibia, requires an ACL reconstruction and meniscus repair and an MCL to be replaced by donor ligaments and has severe bone bruising, and her calf muscle requires reattachment. Understandably, as a result of her injuries, Ava was in considerable pain and went into shock. Her parents called an ambulance and were told one would be sent. After 40 minutes they called again, only to be told a nurse would call back as an ambulance had not yet been dispatched. After waiting yet again another 40 minutes, they phoned back and were told there was no ambulance coming and they had to drive to hospital themselves. How is it acceptable that a young girl in severe pain and shock was denied access to the emergency care she so clearly required?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (12:38): Thank you, Ms Crozier, for your question. I hope that Ava is doing well, and I hope that her family has the supports around her to assist Ava to recover from what sound like really significant and painful injuries. Every day our paramedics respond to about a thousand code 1 call-outs – that is, lights and sirens. We also see around 300,000 additional drawdowns on the system on top of the 000 calls that are made every single day. We want to make sure that the sickest Victorians get the help that they need while we assist paramedics to get back onto the road sooner. This means

that when people call 000 they will be, as a result of our investments, transferred in relation to those secondary triage processes to the Ambulance Victoria –

David Davis interjected.

Harriet SHING: I am going to take up that interjection, Mr Davis. How dare you refer to those paramedics and clinicians who work to assist people through a secondary triage process to provide them with assistance around the sorts of supports that are necessary and appropriate for them as being 'bumped off'? This just highlights the disrespect that you have for paramedics.

Georgie Crozier: On a point of order, President, the minister has had a go at Mr Davis's interjection. I would ask you to get her to come back to this very important issue that I have raised around the failure of Ava not being able to get an ambulance when she required one.

The PRESIDENT: I believe the minister was being relevant before she responded to the interjection. I ask people to refrain from interjecting and the minister to continue and to ignore the interjection.

Harriet SHING: I will ignore the interjection, but what I hope that Victorians will not ignore is the fact that the opposition went to war with paramedics when they were last in government. What we know is that a whole-system response assists more calls to be able to be managed, more people to be able to get the supports that they need when they call for help. I do want to take this opportunity to thank every single one of the paramedics who work so hard every day to respond to that demand. That is why we have grown our workforce by about 50 per cent and invested a record $2 billion in ambulance services. I am not going to comment on individual cases, and I would hope, Ms Crozier, that you do not bring them into this place to make points that do not actually relate to providing comfort to a family who is looking for it.

As part of last week's budget we have built on the investment with an additional $50.7 million supporting, as I said, secondary triage, improving call and dispatch and delivering those innovative solutions aimed at getting paramedics back on the road sooner. We are also expanding the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department, which receives about a thousand calls every day; urgent care clinics and Nurse-on-Call; as well as the standards for timely ambulance and emergency care. We will continue to invest in our paramedics. The truth is you will not.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:41): Ava's father wrote to the minister on 2 May highlighting this very issue. How dare you pointscore against his requirements about his daughter's needs when he raised them with you and has asked me to raise them with you in the Parliament, which is exactly what I am doing. Shame on you. Because you are only just a part-time minister, you are not looking at your correspondence properly. Your government has for years promised to fix the system, yet ambulance response times remain well below the government's own targets, and sometimes there is no ambulance available at all, as in this case. In fact the government has not even released the latest data, which is now 12 days overdue – again, a lack of transparency. This government is just appalling. Why would any Victorian trust you to fix the problems that are plaguing our ambulance system, like Ava's father expects to be done?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (12:43): Ms Crozier, if you had started your question by indicating that about nine days ago Ava's dad had written to me, that would have been a very different conversation that we would have been having in this chamber.

Georgie Crozier interjected.

Harriet SHING: Ms Crozier, when the coalition was in government – and you would remember this – you withheld data on ambulance reporting. In fact you did not report on it at all. You did not support paramedics then and you do not support them now. You provided evidence of legislation that was riddled with holes, egregious failures in the system that you oversaw the decline of –

Renee Heath: On a point of order, President, question time is not a time for the government to attack the opposition, so I ask you to bring her back to the question.

The PRESIDENT: That is a correct point of order, but it is not a one-way street. If there is commentary within the question, I think the minister has a right to respond.

Harriet SHING: As I said at the outset, Ms Crozier, if you had gotten to your feet today and asked for assistance in understanding what had occurred, then I would have been able to provide you with an assurance that I am very happy to have that conversation with you. But, Ms Crozier, you are not interested in conversations; you are interested in pointscoring. I will work through that process with Ava's dad directly while you keep on attacking from the sidelines.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:44): I move:

That the minister's responses be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Ministers statements: early childhood education and care

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:44): I rise to update the house on how the Allan Labor government is continuing to build and expand kindergartens right across the state, with this year's budget delivering even more investment for Victorian families. Last week I joined a member for Eastern Victoria Mr McIntosh to celebrate two fantastic projects that our government is delivering for communities in South Gippsland: Mirboo North Primary School Kindergarten and Early Learning Victoria Meeniyan.

From next year children in Mirboo North will have access to a brand new kindergarten that will be co-located with the local primary school, supporting a smooth transition to prep and allowing busy parents to do a single drop-off. In Meeniyan our government will deliver a new Early Learning Victoria centre with capacity for up to 57 local children each day. The centre will provide three- and four-year-old kindergarten – free kindergarten – as well as long day care and will include space for other services and support such as maternal and child health, allied health and playgroups. Early Learning Victoria Meeniyan will be a government owned and operated centre and will be open for term 1 next year. In addition to these brand new facilities, from next year our government will be delivering additional hours of free kinder for children living in Mirboo North, Meeniyan and across the area with the continued rollout of additional hours of four-year-old kindergarten. These children will have access to between 16 and 20 hours of play-based learning each week.

That is not all. In this year's budget we are investing almost $500 million to deliver again more kindergartens, more Early Learning Victoria centres, and new and expanded kindergartens on other sites. We are also investing a further $9.8 million to provide Building Blocks improvement and inclusion grants to support services to upgrade and refurbish their learning spaces and foster inclusive environments for children of all abilities. As a government, we have now delivered more than $3.8 billion in investment to build, expand and upgrade kindergartens and early learning centres right across the state. We are doing this because we know that every child deserves the chance to learn, play and grow in a great local kindergarten. Every child deserves the best start in life.

Maroondah Hospital

Nick McGOWAN (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (12:47): (1315) My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, when will the new emergency department for children at Maroondah Hospital commence operation?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (12:47): Thank you, Mr McGowan, for your question and for your interest in the delivery of health services across the state. You have spoken about health services across the state on a number of occasions. You have also spoken at length about Maroondah Hospital and about the work

that we are continuing to do to support our workforce and to support an increase in the number of planned surgeries; the assistance that is provided to people through emergency admission, treatment, transfer and dispatch; and the work to provide often complex supports for people in a clinical and surgical response as well as linkages to community health.

We will continue, as we have been, the planning for the new hospital at Maroondah, QE2, to make sure that with this really complex site we are able to deliver a new hospital which is fit for purpose and that as we stage the delivery of these major hospital investments we are making sure that we balance these builds with our broader –

Nick McGowan: On a point of order, President, if I can ask you to bring the minister to the very simple question. The question is when the emergency department for children will commence operation. It was, I will remind the minister, promised in 2019. The subsequent rebuild was promised in 2022 for $1.05 billion. It was also promised to commence the hospital rebuild, with the emergency department to commence in 2025 and begin operation in 2029. So I repeat: Minister, when will the emergency department for children commence operation?

Harriet SHING: Thank you, Mr McGowan. On your point of order – and I am going to use that to inform the further context that I provide to you – we have continued to invest in new hospitals. We have actually built 11 hospitals since we were elected. The only hospital –

David Davis interjected.

Harriet SHING: Mr Davis just referred to the one hospital that the Liberals built? No, that is right – you have not, because you have never built a hospital.

Nick McGowan: On a point of order, President, I appreciate the interjections do not assist. Nonetheless, the question is a very simple one. It is about the emergency department for children at Maroondah Hospital. The people in my community take it very seriously. They would like to know when it will commence operation.

The PRESIDENT: I will call the minister back to the question.

Harriet SHING: Maroondah Hospital is a really active healthcare environment. It is a really complex site that requires detailed design work and also planning to make sure that those works are sequenced appropriately to ensure that the hospital can also operate smoothly. Planning works continue so that the hospital we build, as I said, is fit for purpose and can meet the needs of the community within Eastern Health's area of coverage.

Nick McGowan: On a point of order, President, again I ask you to bring the minister back to the question of when the emergency department will commence operating. The planning money that the minister referred to actually expires at the end of June, and there is no money in the forward estimates whatsoever. So the simple question is: when will the emergency department for children commence operation?

The PRESIDENT: That is not a point of order. I believe the minister was relevant after your last point of order.

Harriet SHING: That planning work continues.

Georgie Crozier interjected.

Harriet SHING: Ms Crozier, I am going to take you up on your interjection there. You said, 'It's not going to happen.' Well, with $40 billion of cuts, nothing is going to be built under a coalition government. Do you know how we know that? It is because when you were in government you closed 12 hospitals, you sold off two more and then you prepared to flog the Austin –

Renee Heath: On a point of order, President, question time is not a time to attack the opposition. Stop gaslighting. I ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question.

The PRESIDENT: The first part of the point of order was correct, but the second part we will leave out. We will leave that bit out. There is a lot of noise in the chamber as well, so if people can come to order, that will be good as well.

Harriet SHING: We have built 11 hospitals. You closed 12. You sold off two more. We have employed 17,000 nurses. You went to war with them. We have invested billions of dollars this year, a record investment, in health, and you have got a $40 billion hole that will result in job cuts and no new hospital for Maroondah under – *(Time expired)*

Nick McGOWAN (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (12:52): Before the 2022 state election your government promised it would:

> … invest between $850–$1,050 million in the new hospital, which will include a new emergency department (ED), operating theatres, day procedure facilities and specialist care spaces. It will also feature an expanded medical imaging unit and two six-story in-patient towers, housing more than 200 extra beds.

You also promised – and I quote from your press release at the time – that:

> The Queen Elizabeth II hospital –

we will not get started with the title –

> will be able to treat an extra 9,000 in-patients including 22,400 emergency presentations.

You went on in your press release to say:

> Construction is expected to start in 2025, and around 2,500 jobs will be created …

Minister, how do you deliver these increases in in-patients and emergency department presentations if the funding has not even been provided to build this hospital?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (12:53): We deliver on the new builds, Mr McGowan, that you will see around the state every single day, whether it is the new Footscray Hospital, the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital, the community hospitals or the work that we are doing to deliver on the Peninsula hospital.

Nick McGowan: On a point of order, President, I want to point out to the minister that the Joan Kirner hospital is in the western suburbs. We are in the eastern suburbs in Maroondah. It is not actually relevant to the question I asked, which was: how are you going to treat an additional 9000 inpatients and 22,400 emergency presentations if you have not even got one cent of funding for the hospital in the forward estimates?

The PRESIDENT: It is not a point of order.

Harriet SHING: You did talk about the western suburbs, Mr McGowan. Let me take you down to the south-east, where Monash Health is in the process of a $500 million upgrade, and then around to Barwon, which again has half a billion dollars in upgrades there. We will see multilevel towers, including with multiple floors for maternity and birthing services. Again, Mr McGowan, we will continue doing that because we build things. In order to build things you have to plan, and in order to build things you have to borrow –

Nick McGowan: On a point of order, President, again I would ask you to bring the minister back to the question. I appreciate there are other hospitals in this state, but the hospital I am asking about is Maroondah. Maroondah Hospital does not just service the eastern suburbs, it goes right out beyond the district as far as Lilydale and even further afield. I would ask you to bring the minister back to the question, for the good of the citizens in Maroondah and the surrounding districts.

The PRESIDENT: I believe the minister was being relevant to the question.

Harriet SHING: We are going to continue to build hospitals, and we are going to do that with a record investment in health infrastructure by Minister Horne in the other place. We are also going to do that through borrowing. None of this is going to happen under you as the state grinds to a halt and people have nowhere to go for the health care that they so deserve as the population grows.

National disability insurance scheme

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO (Northern Metropolitan) (12:55): (1316) My question is for the Minister for Disability. Minister, the Commonwealth has announced significant cuts to the NDIS that are estimated to see 160,000 vulnerable people with disabilities removed from the scheme, with many more to be affected. The recent state budget includes funding for foundational supports for people with disability, but the funding amount is still to be confirmed. What specific supports can you advise will be provided, and how will people access and be assessed for these foundational supports?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:55): I thank Ms Gray-Barberio for her question. Obviously the federal budget is still to be delivered today, and what has been reported is a fair degree of conjecture until the point Treasurer Chalmers hands down his budget. Like everyone in this place, I look forward to reading it. In relation to the national disability insurance scheme, it is obviously a national scheme and it is a scheme which we have discussed at length in many different ways in this place certainly in the time that I have been disability minister. As Victorian disability minister, we have continued to engage with the Commonwealth in relation to what the future NDIS looks like, and in particular indeed, in intersection with my two portfolios, we have continued to engage with the Commonwealth about what that particularly looks like for children, ensuring that no child gets left behind and that every child and every person gets the disability support services that they are entitled to. We look forward to continuing to have those conversations with the Commonwealth. We hope that they are productive, and as those conversations proceed we will continue to keep the chamber updated.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO (Northern Metropolitan) (12:57): Thank you, Minister. In January you stated that there would be no changes to NDIS access and eligibility before foundational supports are implemented at scale. Given the Commonwealth has announced support needs assessments will begin from April 2027, can you confirm whether your above statement still stands and foundational supports will be fully implemented in Victoria before these changes take effect so people with disabilities are not left behind?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:57): I thank Ms Gray-Barberio for her question. As many of my colleagues will assuredly attest, I will resist the temptation to express some of my broader views in relation to access to the national disability insurance scheme. But I have never at any stage said – quite the opposite of what Ms Gray-Barberio has just put into the room, it has always been my concern that children in particular, and people more broadly with disability, may in national changes that are being put forward by the Commonwealth government indeed miss out on the services that they are entitled to. I have been arguing with the Commonwealth about this for the last three years, and indeed Victoria has been the loudest of advocates in relation to this point for the longest time: that people should not be removed from the NDIS in order to solve a budget problem, that there absolutely is reform work that needs to happen for the NDIS, that for all people the NDIS should be the insurance scheme that it was set up to be for people with disability and that in relation to the changes that the Commonwealth have been foreshadowing there absolutely needs to be a plan to ensure that where there are changes that result in people no longer being able to access the NDIS – *(Time expired)*

Ministers statements: container deposit scheme

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Environment, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:58): I rise to inform the house about the container deposit scheme Win a Million Cents competition, which I recently launched at the Port Phillip EcoCentre. This fantastic competition, now in its second year, is running from 4 May to

14 June 2026. Five Victorians stand to win $10,000 each, with one of the lucky winners able to also donate $10,000 to a registered CDS Vic donation partner of their choice – a really deserving charity. Entry is simple: return 50 or more containers in a single transaction at any of our 620 refund points across the state and complete a short entry form. There is no limit on the number of times you can enter. This competition is designed to continue the growth of and participation in the scheme throughout the year, while broadening community awareness of the scheme.

Evan Mulholland interjected.

Enver ERDOGAN: Last year's winners returned containers in Geelong, Gippsland, Wodonga and the Melbourne suburbs of Bayswater and Macleod – Mr Mulholland, I think near you – a geographic spread that reflects the reach of the scheme across the state. CDS Vic is one component of the Allan Labor government's $538 million investment in Victoria's circular economy transition that is helping divert up to 80 per cent of Victoria's waste from landfill by 2030. Since its commencement in November 2023 Victorians have returned more than 3 billion eligible containers. That is more than $300 million returned to the pocket of Victorians and $3 million donated to Victorians' registered donation partners. This scheme has created over 600 new jobs in our state and reduced eligible containers found as litter by 71 per cent.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Port Phillip EcoCentre for hosting us; VicReturn for organising the competition; and the member for Albert Park for joining me at the launch of this competition, the hardworking Nina Taylor. Through the CDS our government is delivering for the environment while also putting money back into the pockets of all Victorians.

Constituency questions

Southern Metropolitan Region

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (13:01): (2306) My question is to the Minister for Education. How is the Allan Labor government investing in school infrastructure to improve learning environments for the students in Southern Metro? Last week the Victorian budget delivered significant investments in local schools, delivering better education for kids from Brighton through St Kilda and all the way to Balwyn North. The budget included $16 million for upgrades and modernisation at Brighton Beach Primary School. I had a chat last week to Bev, the principal of Brighton Beach Primary, who is over the moon with the investments that Labor is making in her school and that local community. St Kilda Primary School are going to get their community hall and upgrades, and I know the member for Albert Park has been a tireless advocate for St Kilda Primary School. I visited the school with her, and my colleague Mr Berger has been to the school many times. Labor invests in local schools, and only Labor delivers upgrades.

Northern Victoria Region

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (13:02): (2307) My question is for the Minister for Energy and Resources. Will the minister listen to the Dookie community and remove their district from the Central North renewable energy zone? Last week I joined two community meetings of over 250 and 150 people from Dookie and surrounding areas who were outraged by the surprise inclusion of their area in the Central North REZ in the final Victorian transmission plan. The response from those attending was loud and clear: they do not want to be part of the renewable energy zone. Dookie soil is unique and traditionally returns a much higher yield. It is some of the most productive soil in Victoria, and it must be protected. I call on the minister to remove this area from the draft declaration order, or if the Labor government insists on including it, there must be more time for the community to provide feedback. All other zones had 12 months of early consultation and a four-month window to make submissions on the draft declaration order. Residents of Dookie deserve the same amount of time to make their case.

South-Eastern Metropolitan Region

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:03): (2308) My constituency question today is for the Minister for Police and Minister for Community Safety. On 14 April I attended the Berwick traders crime and safety meeting organised in collaboration with the City of Casey. When you sit in a room full of residents telling their stories, it really brings home the crime crisis and its impacts. People told stories of persistent retail crime. They do not even bother reporting it anymore. Casey council presented their survey data on perceptions of safety and, in short, it is very bad and getting worse. The Victoria Police members who attended had to apologise to people that they simply did not have the resources to attend every incident. They explained that on night shifts there are sometimes only 12 police officers to cover a population nearly the size of Tasmania's. When will the City of Casey have adequate police resources so that when residents call police, someone is able to show up?

Southern Metropolitan Region

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (13:04): (2309) My question is also to the Minister for Police. Russell Frajman is a 65-year-old pharmacist who has operated his business in St Kilda for 35 years with his wife Charlotte. I have known both Russell and Charlotte for years, and they have been telling me about the escalating crime in and around the St Kilda area, with local traders and residents often speaking out on how unsafe they are feeling. On 28 April Russell was violently assaulted by a man who had previously been observed stealing from the store. When Russell told him to leave, the man hurled verbal abuse and punched him, leaving him with bruises and cuts on his face and broken glasses. Charlotte called 000 but was told police were too busy to attend. Meanwhile, the perpetrator remained nearby, walking up and down the street outside the pharmacy as Charlotte tended to Russell's injuries. Despite multiple calls to 000, it took 24 hours for the police to attend. After this vicious attack on a community pharmacist in the heart of Melbourne, why did it take police 24 hours to arrive at the scene?

North-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Aiv PUGLIELLI (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:05): (2310) My question today is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Sediment caused by the North East Link project continues to be a serious problem for the health of our waterways in the north-eastern suburbs. A sediment island has now formed in the Yarra River at its confluence with the Plenty River. This is not normal. This is not caused by drought or rains or anything natural, it is caused directly by the works on the M80 ring-road. These huge road projects are wreaking havoc across our local environment in the electorate I represent. Minister, are you aware of this particular sediment island, and what are you doing to address it?

Western Metropolitan Region

Moira DEEMING (Western Metropolitan) (13:06): (2311) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The Hopkins Road interchange with the Western Freeway has repeatedly been ranked as one of the riskiest intersections in Melbourne's western suburbs. Since 2012 there have been more than 23 accidents involving 62 people, with 32 of those injured. Residents in the Western Metro Region have been calling for this intersection to be fixed for years and years. The federal government pledged $1 billion earlier last year towards upgrades on this freeway between Melton and Caroline Springs, but actual work has yet to be announced. When will the government commit to specific improvements to this interchange, and how much longer do those thousands of Victorians who rely on the Western Freeway and on this government for safety have to wait until it is done?

Western Metropolitan Region

David ETTERSHANK (Western Metropolitan) (13:06): (2312) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment. My constituent is a parent who read about the Breathe Melbourne project, which was published in the *Australian Journal of General Practice* last week. Researchers from Deakin University found children in Maribyrnong, Hobsons Bay and Brimbank experience 26 to 53 per cent higher asthma-related emergency visits than the state average. These concerns have

been echoed by another Australian multiresearch facility report released just today that again directly links air pollution to a range of respiratory and cardiac conditions. The issue is clearly much bigger than just truck transport and the potentially ameliorative impact of the West Gate Tunnel. Further, air quality monitoring since the tunnel opened shows repeated exceedence of major pollutants. My constituents ask: what concrete steps will the minister take to improve air quality in the inner west to reduce the burden of disease?

Northern Metropolitan Region

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (13:07): (2313) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and it concerns the lack of accessible tram stops on Sydney Road in Brunswick and Coburg, which I have asked about before. According to the 30-year strategy report by Infrastructure Victoria released in November last year, at the current rate it will take Victoria 166 years to make all tram stops accessible. What is the justification for ignoring the *Disability Standards for Accessible Transport 2002*, which required all tram stops to be accessible by December 2022? I note on the weekend the government announced planning would be undertaken for this important work. I note my constituents have seen this before. We all remember the Upfield line duplication planning study in 2017 – the same one they will not release the documents for – and they have just announced another one in this budget. I am guessing we will not see that either. I ask the minister: when will you commit to actually getting on and building them?

Northern Victoria Region

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (13:08): (2314) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment. Last month Parks Victoria cleared rare montane grassy woodland in Macedon Regional Park to create a viewscape for the Mount Macedon memorial cross. Only around 21 hectares of this woodland survive across central and western Victoria. Snow gums, alpine ash and other native plants on this land are important habitat for animals and fungi. Despite Macedon Ranges Shire Council refusing its planning permit in 2023, Parks Victoria gained approval for the clearing from the Minister for Planning, who deemed the project to be of state significance. Parks Victoria justified this both to the public and to the minister based on a heritage obligation requiring view lines to be maintained at the memorial cross. However, Heritage Victoria has since confirmed this obligation does not exist. Since this was used as a central justification for the clearing of threatened woodland, what steps is the minister taking to set the record straight?

Southern Metropolitan Region

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (13:09): (2315) My question today is for the attention of the Minister for Housing and Building. It follows a number of questions I have asked previously; this is about a local architect who has communicated with me about these matters. He is concerned about decisions to abolish the Architects Registration Board of Victoria. I have asked twice now in the chamber matters about this, including to the Minister for Housing and Building. I ask the minister now why the government is so determined to persist with this step of abolishing the architects registration board. There is no cost to this in the state budget; it is a self-funding board. Further, why is it that the government hates the architecture profession? They have this set against the architecture profession. Given the need to make sure our housing standards are greater rather than lower, why is it that the government is so determined to rub the architects out in the way they are?

Northern Metropolitan Region

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO (Northern Metropolitan) (13:10): (2316) My question is to the Minister for Planning. High Street, Northcote, was named the world's coolest street by *Time Out* magazine. My constituents in Northcote are proudly socially, environmentally and health conscious. Many have expressed deep concerns about the proposed McDonald's restaurant on High Street, including health impacts of processed food and environmental impacts on the community. Initially the McDonald's planning permit application was rejected by Darebin council following strong

community opposition. However, VCAT has now overturned the decision because current Victorian planning laws do not allow councils to refuse fast-food developments on public health grounds. Given the government committed to reviewing options for revising Victoria's planning provisions in line with recommendation 24 of the parliamentary inquiry into food security in Victoria to include health and food security objectives and improved health outcomes, will the minister provide a timeframe for completion of this review for communities like Northcote?

Western Victoria Region

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (13:11): (2317) My question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport. Geelong commuters are at breaking point. Yesterday Southern Cross-bound services stalled due to train and equipment faults near Manor Junction, with the 7:35 am Wyndham Vale service terminated mid-journey, leaving passengers stranded on the platform. This follows weeks of chaos: damaged cables between Lara and Wyndham Vale, evening trains replaced by coaches, further bus substitutions for West Tarneit works and delays of 40 minutes or more. Geelong is one of Victoria's fastest growing regions, yet its commuters are treated as an afterthought. Minister, when will the government deliver a reliable Geelong rail service instead of leaving passengers stranded, delayed and packed onto replacement buses?

Northern Victoria Region

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL (Northern Victoria) (13:13): (2318) My constituency question today is for the Minister for Police. My constituents ask why veterans wanting to join the police force are being made to wait so long before being accepted. Here in Victoria we have a well-documented shortage of police on the streets. We have heard stories of police being redirected from smaller stations to fill gaps in staffing numbers. The shortage in police numbers is for a variety of reasons, including burnout, illness, rising crime and workload demands and reduced support for members. Sometimes enough is enough, but who can blame them? But there is a solution. I have been told by some constituents that they, as veterans, are more than willing to join the police force and help bolster the numbers. They bring with them years of discipline and training, but there seems to be a hold-up in the system. One veteran I spoke to is young, fit and raring to go, but he has been waiting 16 months for his application to be approved. He has jumped through all the hoops and done all the tests. We need to take the opportunities presented and boost our police numbers, yet those who are ready to go are left waiting. Minister, my constituents ask why veterans wanting to join the police force are being made to wait so long before being accepted.

Northern Victoria Region

Gaelle BROAD (Northern Victoria) (13:14): (2319) My question is to the Minister for Health. Last week 11 ambulances were ramped at Bendigo Health, and I have heard from residents that have been left waiting for a bed. A man admitted to emergency on Saturday night was still waiting for a bed on Monday evening when he was discharged and told to see his local doctor. Another resident, in her 90s – terminally ill – waited for half a day in emergency and passed away just days after. Another elderly lady was left in a wheelchair overnight as no beds were available. Albury–Wodonga hospital was 91 beds short, with people left waiting in corridors for beds. Day after day our paramedics, nurses and doctors are being asked to do more with less. What is being done to address these issues and ensure that regional Victorians can access emergency health care when they need it?

Western Metropolitan Region

Trung LUU (Western Metropolitan) (13:15): (2320) My question is for the Minister for Emergency Services and is regarding the proposed sale of the Fire Rescue Victoria fire stations in Melbourne's west in my electorate. This includes Yarraville, West Footscray, Moonee Ponds and Laverton. Firefighters and residents have raised concerns about the potential impact of selling these established fire stations, especially when the frontline fighters' capacity is already under strain. Can

the minister assure my constituents that the sale of these stations will not affect emergency response times or service delivery to my residents in the surrounding western suburbs?

Petitions

Kingswood golf course

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) presented a petition bearing 2064 signatures:

> The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that the Kingswood Golf Course in Dingley Village was re-zoned by the Victorian State Government with the input of the Golf Course Redevelopment Standing Advisory Committee (SAC)
>
> We are concerned that the Government has already announced a minimum of 800 lots on the site before consulting residents or adhering in any way to the SAC recommendations.
>
> **The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to adhere to all the findings of the Golf Course Redevelopment Standing Advisory Committee, including implementing flood controls, considering the nearly 2,000 submissions sent by residents to Engage Victoria in April 2025, ensuring that the development is at least halved in number and retaining the entirety of flora and fauna on the site.**

Ann-Marie HERMANS: As this is a petition qualifying for debate under standing order 11.03(10), I give notice that I intend to move 'That the petition be taken into consideration' on Wednesday of next sitting week.

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO (Northern Metropolitan) presented a petition bearing six signatures:

> The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that Clause 37 in Schedule 1 of the *Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998* imposes a default non-publication restriction on individuals under guardianship or administration orders. These provisions, often referred to as 'gag laws', prevent people from publicly identifying themselves or speaking about their own experiences without prior approval from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. While intended to protect vulnerable individuals, in practice, they silence people with disability, undermine open justice and deny the basic human right to tell one's own story.
>
> We seek reform to introduce a targeted, rights-based framework that ends default non-publication and upholds autonomy and freedom of expression, applies protective orders only where there is clear evidence of exploitation or harm and aligns Victorian law with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Recommendation 6.12 of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.
>
> **The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to repeal Clause 37 in Schedule 1 of the *Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998* and restore dignity, open justice, and human rights to people with disability in Victoria by introducing a targeted, rights-based framework.**

Mental health services

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) presented a petition bearing 326 signatures:

> The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that young people in country Victoria, especially in the Hume region, face severe disadvantage when experiencing mental health crises. There are no local adolescent inpatient beds. The only exceptions are two beds in Mildura and two beds in Traralgon, leaving central and northeast Victoria with nothing despite the Hume region and country Victoria serving more than 1.3 million people.
>
> Right now, adolescents in the Hume region experiencing a mental health crisis are admitted to emergency or adult wards. These are environments that are unsafe and inappropriate for their age. For families, the closest adolescent unit is in Box Hill, which is up to a four-hour drive depending on where they live and even then, there is no guarantee of a bed. Statewide, just four of Victoria's 58 acute adolescent beds are located outside of Melbourne and not a single one is in the Hume region.

The consequences are profound. Rural young people already face higher rates of mental illness and suicide, and without local services, these risks are magnified. Families are left unsupported, forced to choose between unsafe care or exhausting travel far from home.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to urgently fund and establish at least eight dedicated adolescent inpatient mental health beds in the Hume region to ensure that young people can access safe, timely and age-appropriate care close to home.

Wendy LOVELL: I move:

That the petition be considered on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Delburn wind farm

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) presented a petition bearing 2805 signatures:

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council to the Allan Government's decision to bail out the defunct Delburn Wind Farm using SEC Victoria and taxpayer funds, after costs ballooned from $320 million to $700 million and private investors abandoned the high bushfire risk project.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to immediately cancel the Delburn Wind Farm and reverse the SEC Victoria funding, due to a clear conflict of interest and unacceptable bushfire and financial risks.

Melina BATH: As this is a petition qualifying for debate under standing order 11.03(10), I give notice that I intend to move 'That the petition be taken into consideration' on Wednesday of next sitting week.

Papers

University of Divinity

Report 2025

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (13:19): I move, by leave:

That the University of Divinity report 2025 be tabled.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Alert Digest No. 6

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:19): Pursuant to section 35 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, I table *Alert Digest* No. 6 of 2026, including appendices, from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. I move:

That the report be published.

Motion agreed to.

Annual Review 2024: Statutory Rules and Legislative Instruments

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:20): Pursuant to section 35 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, I table the *Annual Review 2024: Statutory Rules and Legislative Instruments*, including appendices, from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. I move:

That the report be published.

Motion agreed to.

Legal and Social Issues Committee

Inquiry into Public School Funding

Joe McCRACKEN (Western Victoria) (13:20): Pursuant to standing order 23.22, I table a report on the inquiry into public school funding, including an appendix and extracts of proceedings from the Legal and Social Issues Committee, and I present the transcripts of evidence. I move:

That the transcripts of evidence be tabled and that the report be published.

Motion agreed to.

Joe McCRACKEN: I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

At the outset I do want to acknowledge my colleagues right across the chamber who have contributed to this report, including deputy chair of the committee Mr Galea, his colleague Mr Batchelor and of course my crossbench colleagues as well. I have got to say that everyone worked in a very collegiate manner, and although there might have been some disagreements here and there, I think we all worked in a very positive way together. I also do want to thank the committee staff for all the work that they have done in helping us to get to this point. This was an important inquiry and an important report that reveals a lot of issues in the education system in this state.

I want to draw everyone's attention to the first four findings of the report, which really do tell the story. The first finding is that Victorian government schools have only been funded at around 90 per cent of the recommended Gonski amount since 2018. That is since 2018, and that in itself is quite significant. The second finding is that it is unclear when Victoria will reach the 75 per cent SRS, schooling resource standard, funding share that has been committed to. We did note that there were references to 2028, 2031 and 2034, so it is very, very difficult to actually find when that will happen.

The Victorian government has not yet met its obligation to fund the 75 per cent of the schooling resource standard, which is the minimum standard. Other jurisdictions have reached 100 per cent, but we have not reached 75 per cent yet. And the Victorian government has yet to reach a long-term bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth for ongoing school funding. These are all incredibly important issues to ensure that we have an education system that is robust and that is fit for purpose. We heard a huge amount of evidence in the inquiry regarding teachers and the difficulty they are experiencing in terms of workload, burnout and stress. A lot of teachers have left the system, and that is very sad.

We had the Australian Education Union come in and talk to us as well, and some of their testimony on behalf of their members was extremely troubling, which is probably why we are seeing strikes across the state. Teachers are suffering, and we hope that in the future teachers are respected and valued as they should be in the supposed Education State. Perhaps that is just more in name than it is in practice. But we say that at the centre of all this has to be the people that we serve, the young children in the state's care, who are relying on an education to propel them into the future. When decisions are taken that delay or cut funding, which have a real, tangible, meaningful impact on their prospects and their future, what are we as a state if we claim to be the Education State but we are not? That is the great shame of this. I commend the report to the house, and I encourage everyone to read it.

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:24): I am pleased to rise to speak on this report, and in doing so I wish to acknowledge again all committee members and Mr McCracken, our chair, as well as the incredible hard work of the secretariat and committee staff as per usual. This was by and large a very collegial, collaborative inquiry in which we did get to explore this particular facet of public school funding in particular detail, and I anticipate I will run out of time to get through all of my remarks today. But as we look at it through the context and the prism of Victoria having both its best ever NAPLAN results and the best results in the nation, with classroom student-to-teacher ratios at the lowest of any state or territory, it is an important opportunity to look at the point in time that we

are in on the journey towards Victoria and the Commonwealth working together to maintain and to achieve full schooling resource standard funding as part of an ongoing, permanent bilateral agreement which we are very much looking forward to being signed – I anticipate and hope very soon – which will then supplant the existing interim agreement and set that path forward for the delivery of the SRS targets. There was much good evidence that we heard, including from the teachers themselves and AEU representatives.

Teachers' pay and conditions certainly do comprise a significant part of the SRS as a whole, and that is something that is important to be taken into account as well. Something that is not taken into account in the SRS is capital funding, and whilst Victoria has built the same number of new schools as every other state and territory in the country combined over the past seven years and that is matching the phenomenal growth that we have seen in Victoria's public schooling sector, which has not been seen in other states, there is much more to say about the mechanisms and the ways in which targets will change throughout the year. I anticipate having more to say at a future date.

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:26): I too rise to speak on this report, and I want to thank the chair and deputy chair, in particular my colleague Mr McCracken. It was a very collaborative inquiry, and I was following and monitoring the responses because having been a schoolteacher myself, having been raised in many generations of education and being aware of the issues from all of my local constituents within their schools I wanted to hear what was going to be said through this report. It is interesting to note that the SRS funding, the schooling resource standard funding, cannot be used for major capital works. It has a specific use, and there is a target for 2034. Victoria is currently the only Australian state or territory that has not finalised its trajectory to reach 100 per cent of the SRS before the current multilateral agreement expires at the end of 2034, and we still do not know through this inquiry why that is.

However, there were a number of things that came out, and I am looking forward to speaking further on this particular topic. But it does concern me when we have schools that have putrid toilets where their buttons are broken and when we have schools having to repair those themselves. This is part of what that SRS funding is for. It is also for supplies. I personally know that there are schools that are struggling just to have paper for students to use. What came out of this was the inequity with which expenditure takes place and people feeling that it is not evenly distributed. I think that these political punches of where money goes become a real concern when you are in an area that perhaps is not receiving the equitable funding that is required. While I look forward to speaking on this further, I thank you for the opportunity of being part of the committee and I thank all committee members.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO (Northern Metropolitan) (13:29): I rise to make a contribution to the recent Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee parliamentary inquiry into public school funding. I want to thank the chair, parliamentary colleagues and especially the secretariat for the planning and organising that went into the hearings. I would also like to extend a huge thanks to teachers, parents, advocacy groups, principals and most of all the students that are on the receiving end of the Allan Labor government's reckless decision to cut $2.4 billion from the public schools.

This inquiry revealed what is true and known: that Victorian public students are being left behind by this Allan Labor government when compared to other jurisdictions. We heard of parents having to give donations to ensure that the basics were being met, things like tissues and paper. We heard from principals having to make tough decisions in order to support the wellbeing of their teaching staff and students. We heard about the ripple effects on students with disability, migrant and refugee students and students taking alternative learning and online learning, all being left behind by this government's decision. These are not the conditions our Victorian students and public school teachers should be expected to work under. We heard loud and clear that the volume of volunteer hours teachers are giving to their schools and students is indefinite, as we heard from one of the principals in these hearings.

If this Allan Labor government really believes that we are the Education State, they had better start looking at public education as an investment now, because we all know that as a community we will

be paying for it later. For a rich country like Australia this should not be the public education system that our students have to go through; our education system should be a system that is stellar. Instead we find ourselves with public education that is completely broken and in crisis and completely undervalued. It is high time that this government reinstates the $2.4 billion that should be going to schools, to students, to teachers and to the broader community.

Motion agreed to.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Inquiry into the Adequacy of the Annual Budget of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, the Victorian Ombudsman and Integrity Oversight Victoria

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (13:31): Pursuant to section 35 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, I table a report on the inquiry into the adequacy of the annual budget of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, the Victorian Ombudsman and Integrity Oversight Victoria, including an appendix, from the Integrity and Oversight Committee. I move:

That the report be published.

Motion agreed to.

Ryan BATCHELOR: I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

The Integrity and Oversight Committee received a referral from this chamber in March to undertake this inquiry into the adequacy of the annual budget of three of the integrity agencies that we have here in the state of Victoria. The committee undertook that inquiry as requested and gave some careful and I think thorough and thoughtful consideration to some of the matters that are presented to us. Obviously integrity agencies in the state of Victoria, since reforms in 2019, have been appropriated directly from the Parliament, so not from departments. Ministers are no longer the gatekeepers of budget bids from integrity agencies; they go directly into the Department of Treasury and Finance. However, the committee did make a series of recommendations about the way that the transparency of some of this process could be improved so that the Integrity and Oversight Committee, on behalf of the Parliament, has greater insight into some of the matters relating to the formulation of uplift to budgets at these agencies from a procedural point of view. The committee also recognised that the integrity agencies here in Victoria are not subject to efficiency dividends and made some recommendations about ensuring that that exemption is legislated to protect them from any future government that has a different view about whether these integrity agencies should be subject to efficiency dividends.

The committee also had a look, within the timeframe that was available to it, at the funding that has been provided to integrity agencies. For example, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission's funding was $42.3 million in 2020–21 and rose to $66.9 million in 2024–25. Across the board, so for IBAC in particular, that growth in funding has been equivalent to the growth of the general government sector. All of the integrity agencies' examined funding has increased, some quite substantially over that period, and funding for IBAC, Integrity Oversight Victoria and the Victorian Ombudsman has been consistently between 0.08 per cent and 0.1 per cent of total general government expenditure over the last 10 years. An important point to note is that as the general government sector itself has grown and this government has been doing more things, essentially what the committee found is that the funding to these agencies has kept pace with that growth.

There have been some issues – and there were some issues raised, particularly by the Ombudsman – about the way that the legislative framework that exists around the operation of the Ombudsman's office has required the prioritisation of Ombudsman resources on its investigations to meet its legislative requirements, particularly in relation to public interest disclosures. That has meant that it

has been unable, because of the legislative framework, to undertake some of its own-motion investigations, and we think that there should be some amendments there.

On the question of the performance of the agencies, the committee is of the view that the performance benchmarking and reporting metrics that exist as part of the annual budget cycle need to be improved. We do not think that the current set of performance indicators that are reported in the budget are sufficient to let the Parliament understand the complexity of the matters that are before the integrity agencies, and we feel that the performance reporting could be improved and also that the best way to undertake an analysis of the adequacy of the funding should be through a series of regular base funding reviews.

I want to acknowledge the committee secretariat for their enormous work in preparing this report in a very tight timeframe, particularly the committee manager Sean Coley; Chloë Duncan, the senior research officer; Tom Hvala, the research officer; and Whitny Kapa, Emma Daniel, Maria Marasco and Bernadette Pendergast. I also thank Kathleen Hurley from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee secretariat for her assistance in preparing this report. I commend the report to the house.

Motion agreed to.

Papers

Budget papers 2026–27

The Clerk: Pursuant to sections 27D, 27E and 40 of the Financial Management Act 1994, I table the 2026–27:

(a) budget information paper, 'Gender Equality Budget Statement';

(b) budget paper 2, 'Strategy and Outlook';

(c) budget paper 3, 'Service Delivery';

(d) budget paper 5, 'Statement of Finances' (incorporating quarterly financial report 3); and

(e) 'Department Performance Statement'.

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (13:37): On behalf of the Treasurer, I move, by leave:

That the 2026–27:

(a) budget 'Overview';

(b) budget paper 1, 'Treasurer's Speech'; and

(c) budget paper 4, 'State Capital Program'

be tabled.

Motion agreed to.

Harriet SHING: I move:

That the budget papers 2026–27 be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Papers

Tabled by Clerk:

Auditor-General – Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Program Performance, April 2026 (*Ordered to be published*) (released on 30 April 2026 – a non-sitting day).

Bendigo Kangan Institute – Report, 2025*.

Box Hill Institute – Report, 2025*.

Chisholm Institute – Report, 2025*.

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 – Order of 26 April 2026 giving approval to the granting of a lease at Edinburgh Gardens.

Deakin University – Report, 2025.

Federation University Australia – Report, 2025.

Gordon Institute of TAFE (The Gordon) – Report, 2025*.

Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE (GOTAFE) – Report, 2025*.

Holmesglen Institute – Report, 2025*.

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 – Notice under section 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule No. 10 (*Gazette S204, 22 April 2026*).

Inquiries Act 2014 – Interim Report of the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, together with a statement explaining why part of the Interim Report is not to be tabled at this time, under section 37(1) of the Act (*Ordered to be published*).

Judicial Entitlements Act 2015 – Attorney-General's recommendation statement to the 2025 Own Motion Recommendation Report of the Judicial Entitlements Panel, under section 34 of the Act.

La Trobe University – Report, 2025.

Melbourne Polytechnic – Report, 2025*.

Monash University – Report, 2025.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 – Notices of approval of the –

Ararat Planning Scheme – Amendment C43.

Ballarat, Baw Baw, Benalla, Colac Otway, Golden Plains, Greater Bendigo, Hepburn, Horsham, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mansfield, Mitchell, Moorabool, Mount Alexander, Pyrenees, South Gippsland, Surf Coast and Wodonga Planning Schemes – Amendment GC255.

Baw Baw, Cardinia, Hume, South Gippsland and Wyndham Planning Schemes – Amendment GC263.

Bass Coast Planning Scheme – Amendment C176.

Boroondara Planning Scheme – Amendment C413 (Part 3).

Brimbank, Macedon Ranges, Merri-bek and Moonee Valley Planning Schemes – Amendment GC236.

Cardinia and Melbourne Planning Schemes – Amendment GC272.

Casey Planning Scheme – Amendment C304.

Colac Otway Planning Scheme – Amendments C125 (Part 2) and C132.

Darebin Planning Scheme – Amendment C191.

East Gippsland Planning Scheme – Amendment C159.

Glen Eira Planning Scheme – Amendment C280.

Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme – Amendment C275.

Greater Geelong Planning Scheme – Amendments C487 and C488.

Manningham Planning Scheme – Amendments C125 and C142.

Melbourne Planning Scheme – Amendment C493.

Melton Planning Scheme – Amendment C232.

Moorabool Planning Scheme – Amendment C85.

Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme – Amendment C315.

Port Phillip Planning Scheme – Amendment C233.

South Gippsland Planning Scheme – Amendment C133.

Victoria Planning Provisions – Amendments VC232, VC248, VC307 and VC308.

Wangaratta Planning Scheme – Amendment C95.

Wyndham Planning Scheme – Amendment C266.

Yarra Planning Scheme – Amendment C247.

Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission – Matter involving Mr Richard Welch, Member for the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region – Investigation report, April 2026 (*released on 17 April 2026 – a non-sitting day*).

Professional Standards Act 2003 –

The Australian Institute of Building Surveyors Professional Standards Scheme, under section 14 of the Act (*Gazette G16, 16 April 2026*).

The Surveyors Australia Professional Standards Scheme, under section 14 of the Act (*Gazette G16, 16 April 2026*).

Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994 – Nomination Order and Application Order of 31 March 2026, under sections 6 and 8 of the Act and a statement of reasons for making a Nomination Order of 21 March 2026, under section 9 of the Act.

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University) – Report, 2025.

South West Institute of TAFE – Report, 2025*.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament –

Architects Act 1991 – No. 29.

Building Act 1993 – No. 38.

Casino Control Act 1991 – No. 23.

Fines Reform Act 2014 – No. 34.

Infringements Act 2006 – No. 35.

Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 – No. 37.

Magistrates' Court Act 1989 – Nos. 30, 31 and 32.

Meat Industry Act 1993 – No. 22.

Non-Emergency Patient Transport and First Aid Services Act 2003 – No. 26.

Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2010 – No. 39.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 – No. 40.

Professional Standards Act 2003 – No. 36.

Retirement Villages Act 1986 – Nos. 24 and 25.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Nos. 27 and 28.

Supreme Court Act 1986 – No. 33.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 –

Documents under section 15 in relation to Statutory Rule Nos. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38 and 40.

Legislative instrument and related documents under section 16B in respect of –

PrimeSafe Meat Industry Licensing and Fees Determination 2026 under the Meat Industry Act 1993.

PrimeSafe Seafood Safety Licensing and Fees Determination 2026 under the Meat Industry Act 1993 and the Seafood Safety Act 2003.

Sunraysia Institute of TAFE (SuniTAFE) – Report, 2025*.

Swinburne University of Technology – Report, 2025.

TAFE Gippsland – Report, 2025*.

The University of Melbourne – Report, 2025.

Victoria University – Report, 2025.

William Angliss Institute of TAFE – Report, 2025*.

Wodonga Institute of TAFE – Report, 2025*.

* *together with the Minister's reported date of receipt.*

Proclamations of the Governor in Council fixing operative dates for the following acts:

Building Legislation Amendment (Fairer Payments on Jobsites and Other Matters) Act 2025 – Part 2 (other than sections 25(4) and 45(3)) – 15 April 2026 (*Gazette S189, 14 April 2026*).

Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Act 2026 – Parts 4 and 6 and Division 1 of Part 9 – 15 April 2026 – Division 2 of Part 8 – 28 April 2026 – Remaining provisions of Division 1 of Part 8 – 3 May 2026 (*Gazette S189, 14 April 2026*).

Labour Hire Legislation Amendment (Licencing) Act 2025 – sections 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16(2) and (3), 17, 18 and 19 – 1 June 2026 (*Gazette S200, 21 April 2026*).

Petitions

Responses

The Clerk: I have received the following papers for presentation to the house pursuant to standing orders: the Attorney-General's response to a petition titled 'Non-lethal weapons for security guards at shopping centres', the Minister for Education's responses to petitions titled 'Comprehensive sexuality education in schools' and 'Protect Montessori education in public schools', the Minister for Emergency Services' response to the petition titled 'Select committee on fire services funding and resources', the Minister for Health's response to a petition titled 'Public hospital in Tarneit', the Minister for Planning's responses to petitions titled 'Desist from high-rise high-density zone planning' and 'Waste incinerator in Sunbury' and the Minister for Police's response to a petition titled 'Reduce scam locksmith operators'.

Business of the house

Notices

Notices of motion given.

General business

Aiv PUGLIELLI (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:56): I move, by leave:

That precedence be given to the following general business on Wednesday 13 May:

(1) notice of motion given this day by David Limbrick on the model councillor code of conduct;

(2) notice of motion given this day by Rachel Payne on Victora Police's cannabis cautioning scheme;

(3) notice of motion given this day by Bev McArthur on the 2026–27 budget; and

(4) notice of motion given this day by Bev McArthur on transmission lines.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

House Committee

Membership

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (13:57): On behalf of Ms Symes, I move, by leave:

That Lee Tarlamis be a member of the House Committee.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Seebeck Oval upgrade

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:57): I am delighted to report that out of the 2026–27 state budget funding has been secured for the mighty Rowville Hawks footy club, specifically $375,000 worth of upgrades towards their second oval. Seebeck Oval is a terrific facility down there on Stud Road, and it was terrific for Mr Tarlamis and me to join the club over the weekend to watch a match and to also see what these upgrades will deliver. The club has two terrific ovals; however, their second oval, oval number two, has been beset with a number of issues. Firstly, there is no lighting, but secondly, there are many drainage issues with the oval being located very close to the neighbouring

wetlands. After any sort of particularly big rainfall the oval is deluged and sometimes underwater, leading to the local epithet 'Lake Seebeck'. This funding will significantly go towards upgrading the lighting and the drainage, and I am very much looking forward as well to working with Knox City Council and acknowledge Cr Susan Pearce, who I know will be very excited to work with getting some council funding as well. As I did say, we were there to celebrate the news, but also to watch a great game of local football, and what a great game it was. You might even call it a walloping, beating rivals Blackburn by 80 points to 35, certainly an auspicious result for the Rowville Hawks. We will continue to enjoy supporting them and watching this great project take shape.

Protective services officers

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (13:59): On 1 April I called on the Minister for Police to increase the hours for PSOs at Mernda station so that they start to patrol in the hours when students are travelling home from school. A month later there was still no response from the minister, but there was another attack on a teenager at Mernda station. A 15-year-old girl on her way home from school had been bashed and robbed at the very same place where Aidan Becker was killed. After that tragic incident Jacinta Allan said she was sending in her violence reduction unit, but it is clear the unit has not made Mernda station safer, and the minister still will not commit to starting PSOs earlier at Mernda station. Crime is out of control under Labor, and the government's response is just not good enough.

Clarkefield housing development

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (13:59): The Allan Labor government has been using the development facilitation program to bypass Macedon Ranges council, override community objections and impose large mid-density housing developments in towns like Riddells Creek and Gisborne without any promise to make the necessary upgrades in local services and infrastructure. Another large development is on its way to Clarkefield, and there is no sign that the Labor government has committed any funds towards extending the train station platform, enlarging the station car park or upgrading the surrounding arterial intersections. Locals can now have their say about this development on the Engage Victoria portal, and I encourage anyone who catches the train at Clarkefield station or drives on the roads or whose lifestyle will be affected to go online and give their feedback.

Energy policy

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (14:00): The Victorian Labor government last week announced their approval of a huge new gas project in the Otway Basin, just off the coast near the Twelve Apostles. This was devastating news for me and so many people in the coastal communities of Western Victoria who have fought for years against this. Adding to the insult, the Allan Labor government was out spruiking the gas industry lie of a domestic gas shortage to justify this approval. It happened in the same week that federal Labor announced their shifty gas reservation policy. This is basically identical to what the fossil fuel industries peak body Australian Energy Producers called for in their submission to the federal gas export tax Senate inquiry in order to avoid a gas export tax and to ensure that they can keep opening new gas projects. Make no mistake, this is gas policy written by the gas industry for the gas industry. We produce more than enough gas to meet all our domestic needs many times over; Labor just chooses to gift it to fossil fuel companies so they can improve their bottom lines. But this fact does not suit the gas industry and therefore does not suit Labor, because Labor are beholden to the gas industry. That is who they work for – not everyday Victorians, not the environment and certainly not future generations. Do not take my word for it, it is all there in the cold, hard light of the decisions that they make.

St Kilda Primary School

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (14:02): Today I rise to acknowledge the recent funding delivered to the St Kilda Primary School. This is an important investment for modernisation and upgrades that will enhance the learning environment for students and staff. It reflects this government's broader commitment to ensuring schools are well equipped to meet growing demand and deliver a

positive learning environment that parents can trust. I have worked closely with the school to understand its needs and advocate on behalf of both the school and the community of the broader Southern Metropolitan Region. I am pleased to see that that work is now reflected in this outcome, and I commend the Minister for Education for this investment and for supporting every child in our state to access a high-quality public education.

Mar Polis III Nona

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (14:02): It was wonderful to celebrate the elevation of Mar Polis III Nona as Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church. Having an Australian-based archbishop becoming the Patriarch has been a moment of joy for the Chaldean and Australian Catholic communities, and it was wonderful to attend multiple events across the north with my colleagues Jess Wilson, David Southwick, Ann-Marie Hermans and Cr Jim Overend. Congratulations to all the reverend fathers – Monsignor Thair Sheikh, Father Mahir Murad, Monsignor Paul Mingana and Father Saleem Goga – and of course Cr Sam Misho, Waleed Bidawid and all the Chaldean community associations, from the Chaldean League Melbourne to the Chaldean federation and Vic.Talk. May God bless Mar Polis III Nona, and may God bless the Chaldean Catholic Church.

Northern Metropolitan Region Christian and Orthodox communities

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (14:03): The Easter period was a spiritual and significant time for the Christian and Orthodox communities in the north. I am proud to consistently stand with these communities across my electorate. It was my privilege to attend services at Our Lady Guardian of Plants Chaldean Catholic Church, the Syriac Holy Spirit Catholic Church, the Assyrian Church of the East in Coolaroo and St Joseph Melkite Church in Fairfield; to attend Orthodox services at St Aphrem Syrian Orthodox Church in Reservoir, Antiochian Orthodox church in Thornbury and the Ancient Church of the East in Coolaroo; and to spend time with the clergy at Mor Yacoub Syrian Orthodox Church in Craigieburn.

Co.As.It

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (14:04): It was also great to join Co.As.It for a panel of Australian Italian political representatives recently.

Seymour Alternative Farming Expo

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL (Northern Victoria) (14:04): During the break I attended the Seymour Alternative Farming Expo over the entirety of the three days that the expo ran. The expo has been running for 35 years now and has grown to see around 400 exhibitors provide the visiting crowd of more than 20,000 with plenty of machinery on show and exhibitors showcasing innovations in small acreage farming, sustainable practices and rural lifestyle products. Each year I have been I have seen the expo grow, spoken to thousands of people about our state issues and worked with many of them to deliver their voices to this very chamber. The Seymour expo is always a highlight on my calendar each year, and I look forward to next year's expo yet again.

Windsor Community Children's Centre

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (14:05): Last night the City of Stonnington voted to purchase a site at 131 Union Street, Windsor, home of the Windsor Community Children's Centre, from Swinburne University and offer the cooperative a new lease to continue to operate the much-loved childcare and early learning centre. This is a fantastic outcome for the local community, but most importantly it is a win for the children, who will continue to have a warm, wonderful, nature-filled early learning environment for years to come. It has been a tough couple of years for all the parents and staff at the centre, who have faced ongoing uncertainty since Swinburne announced its intention to sell the site. I want to congratulate all of the parents and the community advocates who never gave up the fight. Their dedication and passion have been extraordinary.

The Victorian government has continued to support the Windsor Community Children's Centre. The recent state budget just last week committed $279,000 for vital upgrades to the centre – improvements for the kitchen and other associated areas. Recently the Minister for Finance approved Swinburne selling the site at below market value, an important step in securing this community asset. Given Swinburne were gifted the site for free by the previous government, I reckon a sale price of $8.4 million is a fair and reasonable outcome – an outcome that would never have occurred without the commitment and support of the federal member for Macnamara Josh Burns, who secured $4.3 million from the federal Labor government to support the sale. I want to thank the mayor Cr Sehr and Crs Hely, Hopper, Klisaris and Humphries, who all voted for this great outcome.

Electricity prices

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (14:06): I want to draw the chamber's attention to the transmission use of system increases that have been loaded onto Victorian energy bills for households and businesses, a massive 28 per cent increase in the charges being applied to fund VicGrid – a massive increase across one year. All of that will be sheeted home on the family bills for electricity right across Victoria. VicGrid is a large and growing bureaucracy, a bureaucracy that is charging Victorians massively for the privilege and a bureaucracy that has declared war on country Victoria. They are brutalising country Victoria again and again with the additional powers they have taken and the decisions that they have taken to force through wires and transmission lines without community engagement, without proper community consent, and they are doing that whilst imposing these massive charges. The incredible charges are going to land on so many Victorians. It is an increase from the $798 million that they took last year to $1.018 billion, an increase of 28 per cent in one year – a huge surge in charges being sheeted home to Victorians. Every household bill is going to cop these costs at a time when we have got a cost-of-living crisis and families are doing it tough. This is VicGrid. It is what it is up to, its charges – *(Time expired)*

Energy policy

Katherine COPSEY (Southern Metropolitan) (14:08): Last week Victorians woke up to the news that Labor has approved, in 2026, a huge polluting new gas project right near the Twelve Apostles, the largest gas project in the past decade. This project is locking Victorians into more expensive fossil fuels, meaning higher bills and more damage to our climate. It shows how beholden Labor is to the gas corporations that donate to their slush funds and that they will always put the interests of big gas corporations, like the fossil fuel industry, ahead of everyday Victorians, ahead of the climate and ahead of our pristine oceans. We know Victoria does not need more gas. We do not need more exploration. We do not need more extraction. We have plenty. The Labor government buys the gas industry's lies around a domestic shortage. In fact we just export our gas, and we get a pittance because we do not charge effective taxes on it. At the same time we have an abundance of sun and wind for renewables here in Victoria. This government instead needs to provide more support for households and businesses to swap expensive, polluting gas for cheap, clean renewables and get rid of our dependence on volatile, polluting fossil fuels. They also need to get rid of their dependence on donations from the fossil fuel industry, and they need to stop spouting gas industry lies.

Trish Crossin

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria) (14:10): I rise today to acknowledge with great sadness the passing of Trish Crossin AM. Trish gave a lifetime of service to the community, beginning as a teacher in remote schools in the Northern Territory, and was the first woman to represent the Northern Territory in the Australian Parliament where she served with distinction as a Labor senator for 15 years between 1998 and 2013. Trish was a trailblazer. Throughout her parliamentary career she was a tireless advocate for First Nations communities, education reform and environmental protection. She was a proud unionist, a strong feminist and a co-sponsor of the first marriage equality bill in the Senate. She made a profound contribution in the Geelong region as chair of the Gordon. I had the privilege of working alongside her in that role, and what stood out most to me was how deeply she cared about

students, about opportunity and about the life-changing power of public education. She brought wisdom, calm judgement and a genuine warmth that made people feel heard and valued. Trish backed people. She backed women, mentoring many with generosity, she backed workers and she backed her community with purpose and conviction. Her contribution to the Gordon and to public life will leave a great legacy. My thoughts are with her husband Mark; her children Paul, Melinda, Amanda and Kate; and of course her grandchildren and her many friends and colleagues. Vale, Trish Crossin.

Chinese community

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:11): Over the weekend Liberal leader Jess Wilson announced that a future Liberal government would back the construction of a Chinese Australian community and cultural centre in Box Hill, and this is a really welcome commitment. The Chinese Australian community is one of Victoria's largest communities, and particularly in the north-east of Melbourne we are well known for having the largest Chinese Australian population in the whole of the nation. This centre will bring together young and old and will celebrate food, culture and society. We know that the Chinese community itself is not homogenous; it is diverse. There are many backgrounds within that group, and this will bring them all together. This commitment is actually the product of some amazing and consistent professional advocacy by a number of community members. The organising committee itself, the Federation of Chinese Associations, Asian Business Association of Whitehorse and many community groups and trading associations have all worked incredibly well together to start to bring this vision to life, so I commend them for it. It is a marvellous thing.

Melbourne Loong Football Club

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:13): In a similar vein, I had the absolute pleasure of attending the Melbourne Loong Football Club Auskick day. This is an Auskick group created with the AFL and Melbourne Loong Football Club particularly to find a pathway for Chinese Australian young people to become involved in our great game. It was a fantastic morning.

Australian International Martial Arts Festival

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:13): It was an absolute privilege to attend the closing ceremony at the third Australian International Martial Arts Festival held in Box Hill and Nunawading in my region on Sunday 10 May. Walking into the venue you could immediately feel the energy and the deep sense of tradition that tai chi and other martial arts bring to our community. This was not just a local tournament; it was a world-class gathering that put Box Hill and Nunawading right at the centre of the international stage. We were honoured to welcome competitors who had travelled from across the globe to be here. Seeing athletes of all ages, from young students finding their focus to seasoned masters, was truly inspiring. To have such a high calibre of expertise, including world-renowned grandmasters, right here in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region is a testament to the strength and reputation of this festival. Martial arts is about so much more than physical skill; it is about discipline, respect and the perseverance to keep showing up and doing the work. Those values were on full display in every match and every demonstration we witnessed over the weekend. I want to extend a huge congratulations to the organisers, and particularly Master Wendy, for coordinating such a massive international event. To the participants who competed with such heart: whether you were a local student or an international visitor, you made this festival a resounding success. Thank you for having me, and I look forward to seeing this event continue to grow and thrive in the years to come.

Government performance

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (14:14): Last week confirmed what millions of Victorians already know: the Allan Labor government has lost control of the budget and has no plan to repay the debt that it has racked up, a debt that future generations are going to be saddled with and will have to pay back. We are paying a whopping $1 million per hour in interest repayments on the current debt. In a few years time that figure will climb to over $1.3 million an hour, or over $30 million every single day. This is billions of dollars of interest repayments each year that have to be paid by the

state before any new nurse, midwife, doctor, paramedic, dentist, physio, OT or theatre technician is hired. To put Jacinta Allan's $200 billion debt into some context, what could that have paid for? Well, it could have paid for 2.1 million nurses, 2 million police, 178 hospitals or 1.7 million teachers. These are extraordinary figures, and this is the reality facing Victoria. But the indifference this incompetent Premier and Treasurer have to these numbers and the burdens they are loading future generations with is, quite frankly, frightening. As former Treasurer Peter Costello commented last week:

> Debt creeps up on a government. It starts with small increases and then comes on with a rush.
>
> …
>
> This is where Victoria finds itself. It started with benign neglect from the current government, and now it is a fully blown disease which threatens the financial prospects of the state.

Victorians can see through the spin, the excuses, the deception and the outright lies being peddled by a desperate Premier – a Premier that has no plan. Only the Liberals and Nationals have a plan to fix the budget, and that is exactly what we will do.

Dr Anastasia Kalantzis

Moira DEEMING (Western Metropolitan) (14:16): I rise to give my condolences on the passing of Dr Anastasia 'Ana' Kalantzis, who recently lost her battle against mental health struggles. Dr Kalantzis was a passionate dentist, educator and advocate for mental health. She was a lecturer at the Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne and in dentistry at the University of Melbourne, but she spent the last eight months in and out of public and private mental health facilities across Melbourne, which were sadly ill equipped to help her recover from her struggles. In light of such a tragedy, Ana's family are organising a scholarship in her honour at La Trobe University, and her legacy will be the continued raising of awareness for a compassionate care approach to mental health, strengthening advocacy for mental health patients as well as listening better to their caregivers and their close family members, which will contribute to a more responsive support and service model for mental health in Victoria.

Protective services officers

Renee HEATH (Eastern Victoria) (14:17): I rise today to highlight the danger brought on Eastern Victoria residents by the Allan Labor government's removal of protective services officers from our local train stations. On 18 April the Allan Labor government announced changes that will see PSOs moved away from 119 metropolitan stations and placed on roving patrols. That includes stations such as Cardinia Road, Officer, Tecoma and Upwey. PSOs provide more than just enforcement; they provide certainty. Their presence tells commuters that somebody is there, somebody is watching and help is close by if something goes wrong. Removing them takes away vital protections for parents coming home late, students catching trains in the evening and shiftworkers walking back to their cars after dark. Serious offences at train stations have risen sharply since 2021 – specifically in train stations – and what has this government done? They have decided to strip PSOs away from them. Assault, robbery, stalking and harassment are exactly the offences that make people feel unsafe on public transport. In Monbulk Clare Fitzmaurice has launched a petition calling for the return of PSOs to Tecoma and Upwey stations – something I am proud to support. I hope you can get along and support it and sign it too.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

Lee TARLAMIS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:19): I move:

> That the consideration of notices of motion, government business, 278 to 1405, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026

Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026

Cognate debate

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (14:19): I move, by leave:

> That this house authorises the President to permit the second-reading debates on the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026 and the Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026 to be taken concurrently.

Motion agreed to.

Second reading

Debate resumed on motions of Ingrid Stitt:

> That the bill be now read a second time.

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (14:20): I am pleased to rise and make a contribution to these two bills, being the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026 and the Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026. They do different things, but they are related, and to that extent we are calm with them being debated concurrently – or cognately, as the phrase is correctly. They will be dealt with in committee separately and voted on separately.

I am going to, in the time I have allotted to me, explain these bills and explain our position on these bills. The Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026 is a very large bill. I think when the officials bring the actual bill into the chamber in a moment, which I think they are about to do, you will see that it is a doorstopper of a bill. It is about that fat, and that is because it is a major rewrite, a major change, that is being made here. The bill follows, the government says, years of serious concerns about failures in Victoria's building system, and I agree. When I was shadow planning minister, across a number of periods there were serious issues with the quality of building in the state. The question, though, is not whether something needs to be done about it; the question is whether what the government is proposing will actually fix the problem. That is the question. We have got this massive change that is being made, but I am far from confident that it will actually provide the solutions that are needed.

The bill restructures Victoria's building and plumbing regulatory framework, consolidating administrative, enforcement and disciplinary provisions currently contained across multiple acts, including the Building Act 1993 and the Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995, into a single legislative framework. There is something to be said for that, but it is the actual content that is in question. It establishes a new statutory structure governing the regulation of building and plumbing work, enforcement of standards and the disciplining of practitioners. The bill operates alongside existing legislation, which continues to deal primarily with technical building control and permits. The bill establishes the Building and Plumbing Commission as the central regulatory body, replacing the Victorian Building Authority. So we do not get, as it were, less authorities; we just change them, rename them and give them a slightly different set of functions. The commission's functions include monitoring compliance with building legislation, undertaking enforcement action, administering disciplinary processes for registered and licensed practitioners, overseeing dispute resolution processes and administering levies and relevant insurance and bond schemes.

There is much that could be said about this bill, but the first thing I want to say is there is some, you know, significant concern amongst a number of the building industry groups. The Housing Industry Association (HIA) and Master Builders Victoria (MBV) have both expressed concern, and there is a direct criticism that they have not been involved in the process of bringing this together in the way

they should have. At the end of the day, the building practitioners, the sector, are going to have to live with this and whether it works or not will depend in significant measure on their support and their constructive engagement with it – and I hope that that occurs. But I do want to read out some correspondence, and this is as recent as today, because the bill was rushed into the lower house, forced through, and then it has come here, and it is some weeks since that that occurred. But I went back and talked to a number of the building groups to get a sense of what their view is. I quote:

> HIA does not support the Bill as it imposes even more regulation on the industry without any clear benefit.
>
> We note the Building and Plumbing Commission has been very proactive using its existing powers over the past couple of years and it has been successful in pursuing bad actors in the industry.

I pay tribute to the more recent work of the commission. It has used the sticks and the weapons that it has got, and it should have done that earlier. So I pay tribute to the current administration and the fact that it has actually taken those steps – and that is a valuable set of steps.

> HIA would argue that further enforcement powers are unnecessary –

so this doorstopper of a bill, as I pointed out to people, you could use as a paperweight if you wanted –

> and especially when the introduction of the necessary laws has been rushed.
>
> HIA would argue that regulatory problems with the home building industry arose due to the regulator not using the tools it already had. It does not necessarily need even more tools.

I am going to quote further, because I think this just puts the context of our position on the bill:

> HIA is also extremely disappointed in the lack of consultation with the industry before this Bill was introduced. Industry associations did get a high-level briefing about the Bill and were informed that some new powers would be given to the regulator. We did not however get a reasonable opportunity to review the 600 plus pages of the legislation until it was in Parliament.

We know the government are very resistant to making even the slightest change. Once the bill is in the lower house, they crunch it through, and even here they are very resistant to practical, sensible changes that might be proposed. Quoting further:

> We also did not appreciate that the next Bill would include such significant rewriting of existing laws.
>
> In the limited time we have had we have managed to determine that most of the Bill is a remaking of existing laws. It is far from clear why the existing laws had to be rewritten.

I think their points are exactly right. The powers were there. They had more recently been using those previous powers and enforcement. That has been getting a better result. There is a criticism of a long tail of inaction by the existing body, and that is all legitimate. But it is not clear that what we have got now in this doorstopper will actually achieve the result of bad builders being policed and out of the industry, good builders not being harassed or dragged down and consumers being protected.

A final wing that I think is very important is that costs are kept down. We know the problem with home ownership: it is the cost of houses and the failure of the government to bring forward enough homes. The number of homes has fallen over recent years compared to what it was previously. Many permits are granted. The government points at the councils and says, 'Oh, they're naughty, they're bad, they're blocking permits.' Actually, a lot of permits are issued that are never actioned, because the economics of a lot of developments does not stack up with the current layers and layers and layers of tax that are put on by this government and the Commonwealth government. Up to 45 per cent of the cost of a new home is covered in one three-letter word – tax. You wonder why there are not many homes. It is because the taxes have gone up and up and up and up, and the homes become less and less and less affordable. So I think these are important points. The letter continues:

> In recent years the Victorian government has shown a disturbing tendency to make mistakes in its legislation. We would argue this is in part to unnecessary rushing and excessive secrecy.

I think that is right. I actually think that is a fair criticism across this government's activity more generally. Quoting further:

> … builders and others in the industry operate and little understanding of how their regulation is practically used or enforced. We expect that over the coming years many of these mistakes will become apparent. With proper consultation many of these mistakes could have been avoided.

I will ask some questions in the committee stage of this bill. We are not going to oppose the bill. We are going to move a reasoned amendment calling for more consultation, and it might be an appropriate time to circulate that reasoned amendment.

The PRESIDENT: If that could be circulated, please.

David DAVIS: The urgency that the government has tried to make out about this bill is not really accurate. I move:

> That all the words after 'That' be omitted and replaced with 'the bill be withdrawn and not reintroduced until the government has allowed for proper consultation with the industry to occur.'

It is a very simple point. The HIA, the MBV and other organisations all understand that this has not been properly worked through with those who understand the industry. It is also important to note that the government's achievements in this sector have not been remarkable. They have not been, I think, what people would want to see and want to hear. The Master Builders went on to say they have raised significant concerns with the proposed minimum financial requirements framework, arguing that it is not aligned with the actual drivers of insolvency in the construction sector. They contend that insolvency is primarily caused by cashflow volatility, risk allocation and cumulative regulatory burden rather than inefficient capital, and the proposed revenue to net tangible assets model fails to address these issues.

MBV is particularly critical of the shift from a work-in-progress, capacity-based model to a fixed annual revenue cap, which it argues does not reflect how builders manage risk and may artificially constrain viable businesses. They also highlight concerns about increased compliance costs, complexity in reporting requirements, treatment of trust structures and unrealistic transition frameworks and timeframes. Master Builders Victoria considers that the framework risks reducing builder capacity, increasing costs and negatively impacting housing supply without clear evidence of improved consumer protection. It therefore calls for the reforms to be deferred and redesigned based on stronger evidence and consultation.

What I am saying to the government now is you could just pause and get this right, and that would be a very sensible way forward. I do not expect that that is going to happen with the government and their general attitude. But what I think will happen is they will push forward and there will be bugs and problems in the bill. The bill will cause difficulties. We will be back in this chamber trying to fix problems.

There is strong support for stronger consumer protection and action against poor practice. I think that is the story of the current authority. They have in recent years ramped up their activities, and I for one think they have done a good job. I have put that on record, that they have ramped up, and I think this is the right step to take. They are not always going to be successful with prosecutions, I get that, but holding bad builders to account is an important part of their role. Not crushing good builders is also a part of their role. That is what I am concerned about with this bill. The cumulative effect of reforms, rising costs and fixed-price contract pressures are likely to reduce builder capacity, increase insolvencies and constrain housing supply. It is true that small and medium builders are particularly exposed, with risks of reduced participation, stalled growth or even market exit in some cases. The consolidation of the powers increases the risk that a single regulatory decision could severely disrupt or end a particular business.

There is a lot to be said here. I am going to talk briefly, to make sure I do get sufficient time in the period that we have got, about the other bill, the Cladding Safety Victoria repeal, and I will then come

back to say a little more about what I would call the main bill. The Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill comes along as the government winds down Cladding Safety Victoria, which was established in response to the widespread combustible cladding crisis that followed the Lacrosse and Grenfell Tower incidents. Cladding Safety Victoria was created as a temporary body to coordinate the rectification of unsafe buildings and support affected communities, but its functions are now being transitioned back into the broader building regulatory system. This is the interplay with the other bill. As the initial emergency response phase concludes, the government is restructuring how cladding risks are managed, including shifting responsibilities to existing agencies and embedding ongoing work within the building framework.

It has been a very difficult road with the cladding challenges. I remember being briefed in those early days. I remember Richard Wynne, the then planning minister, got up and said, 'It's all hunky-dory; it's all fine.' A number of us in this chamber, me included, got up and said, 'Actually, it's not fine; it's very dangerous.' You can go and read *Hansard*. You can go and read the adjournment matter. I pointed to some of the English situations which we understand, and it was only a short while after that we had some of our own specific issues. I think the early management here was not good, and then the government realised it had to respond. It did set up the taskforce; Ted Baillieu was part of that. The taskforce, I might add, was very open in the way it briefed the opposition at the time, and we were impressed by those sets of steps that were taken through a lot of that period. There are still many criticisms you could make of the taskforce and the way the government managed it, not least the impact of the levy on housing costs more broadly.

There are levy changes that were explained in the briefing. The briefing said that once the bill is repealed there will be a small adjustment to the building permit levy. This new levy setting is intended to support the broader regulator. It will apply to certain class 2 to 8 apartment-style buildings. It claimed it will not affect traditional smaller homes – and the minister might in summing up just confirm that for the chamber – regional buildings or certain other classes of buildings. The government said apartment developments affected by the levy adjustment would still see an overall reduction in levy costs, because the replacement amount would be smaller than the current levy. The claimed saving mentioned in the briefing was between 47 and 67 per cent, and the minister again might want to make some comment about that.

There are questions that remain, and the minister might want to address some of these in her third reading. Whether the cladding program is truly complete, I am not sure. I am aware personally of a number of properties where the cladding has not yet been replaced, so there are obviously still issues and still risks. President, with your building background you will understand this more than most in the chamber. There are questions about whether there are still outstanding buildings or liabilities. Has enough money been collected to finish the scope of the works? How much money remains in the fund and what happens to those funds after repeal? That was taken on notice at the briefing. I am not aware of any response, but I stand to be corrected if there has been a response on that.

It is important I think, again, to put on record some of the industry concerns. The consulting architects see this as managing a significant regulatory change that would, they said, benefit from certainty and clarity. Further detail would assist in understanding how Cladding Safety Victoria functions will integrate with the Building and Plumbing Commission. Maintaining stability in existing levy arrangements is seen by them as important during the transition. If integration proceeds, a structured transition will be important to retain expertise and continuity. The minister might comment on those points. Additional clarity would be helpful on how residual or emerging cladding risks can be managed, including roles, funding and enforcement. Ensuring that existing data risk assessments and program insights are retained and effectively integrated is, I think, an important step.

The opposition did consult with a number of industry experts, and there was a recognition that Cladding Safety Victoria had made progress in addressing high-risk cladding and is now applying a more risk-based approach. The current approach allows for more proportionate and flexible solutions in some cases, and recent frameworks provide clearer guidance for councils, surveyors and property

owners. There is, it was pointed out, still some uncertainty about how these align with existing standards and how they will operate in practice. The opposition will not oppose the bill. We understand there are a number of key points here. It is an administrative change – that is the essence of it. With those caveats, we want to indicate, again, as I say, that we will not oppose the particular bill.

I am very aware of the government's failure to meet its various housing targets, and we have heard the federal government flapping around today on housing targets. Clearly they are not going to meet their targets either. But what is clear, and I am looking at a Master Builders table and some materials, is that the length of time from approval to completion for domestic houses and units and townhouses – all three – has increased under this government; the time to completion has increased. So permits are being given, but the time to completion has increased. I could put lots of figures on the record here, but that is the simple fact of the matter. The government is not reaching its housing targets. It is a long, long way short. They initially started to say 80,000 per year; they are tens of thousands short of that figure now. If the figure of 800,000 over 10 years is to be met, it is getting harder and harder because of the effluxion of time at a lower rate.

There are a number of points here. The government has been beating the drum about planning changes and planning approvals, trying to make them simple and easy. In theory, smoothing planning can provide some help, but it has to be good planning. Providing bad planning will provide bad outcomes for communities and individual property owners and neighbourhoods. That is the problem with where the government is heading at the moment. We have put on a revocation motion today because the government has forcibly imposed high-rise, high-density zones across the metropolitan area – 26 of them in the first instance, with more to come. They have imposed a so-called townhouse code. It is not really a townhouse code; it is actually a middle-rise code that provides a dogbox shape approved tick-a-box-type arrangement which will provide an ugly and inferior outcome across the city. It will not necessarily be wildly successful in bringing a lot of development forward, because the underlying cost structures have not been dealt with by government.

People like Max Shifman and others have made these points very clearly in the public domain. Some of the planning groups and the building associations have all made the point very clearly that you will not get more development – you will not get more houses and apartments and townhouses coming through – if you keep the heavy hand of the state government and the federal government's tax bearing down on the sector. I mean, the truth is you want to build a tower in the suburbs. If you want to buy in one of those properties, the truth is that a new two-bedroom home or two-bedroom apartment in one of these towers is generally around $1 million or somewhere in that vicinity and many people – most young people – cannot afford that, so the economics do not stack up. They do not stack up because the government has not got the cost structures right. The government has not got the taxes right.

It does help to bring some new supply through. The government has sat still, becalmed on so many development areas, whether it is Fishermans Bend – and it is now nearly 12 years since the government changed. We had all the lectures and homilies in the world about Fishermans Bend, but actually the truth is that very little has happened down there in the last 12 years. Yet with the proper steps, it could have housed up to 80,000 people. Why is the government becalmed on this?

Then if you look around the edge of the city – at the recent inquiry on those planning changes we asked the City of Casey in the hearing about Clyde South. I asked how many people could be homed there, how many new residents. I said, '10,000?' She said, 'No, more – more like 20,000-odd.' How long has this been delayed? Six and a half years. The thing has been stalled. Melbourne Water, other authorities, government authorities are the ones stalling it in many cases. The point here is that is entirely inside the government's control. They could have worked with the council to get that ticked. It is a joint-use development. I am picking that as one example because there is sworn testimony on this case study. Tens of thousands of homes have been stalled and stalled for years – for aeons – because of an incompetent state government. For aeons they have been stalled – years. This is the incompetence of this government. Then they point to other communities and say, 'We're going to strip away your rights to have a say in your local community.' That is their solution instead of cutting the

taxes and making it more accessible by getting the costs down and bringing forward sensible supply where local councils are seeking to do so. There are so many other examples of councils. Maribyrnong is wanting to bring this forward. Many of the development changes that can occur there are quite significant.

Why is it that that big defence site there, the federal defence site, has been left languishing for decades? Why doesn't the federal government – whatever colour it is; I do not care – get in and clean it up? They have been bad landholders, leaving parts of the site polluted. If they were a private sector landholder, the EPA would have been in there and thrown the book at them, but because it is the federal government, they are allowed to leave a site despoiled. It is time the federal government faced up to its responsibilities, cleaned it up and handed it back to the state government to develop. What is wrong with that? Why can't the federal government do that? Why can't the state government press for that? Why can't we get that kind of development happening?

These are the solutions that are needed. These are the solutions that the state government should be looking at. This bill, to be honest, I think is going to be largely beside the point. We are going to seek to move our reasoned amendment to say there should be more consultation, but we are not going to oppose the bill per se. We are going to let that go through. But I do express our concern that there are likely to be bugs in the bill. There are likely to be many bugs that close consultation with the sector, with the industry, would have exposed and which would have led to shaking those out. This is a very reasonable position that we are adopting. We are saying we are not going to oppose the cladding safety bill. We understand it is fundamentally a transition. There are a couple of questions there. But this other bill is a major change, and it is not clear that it is going to get the outcomes that are desired.

Let us go back to what the outcomes should be. They should be protecting consumers, getting the bad builders out of the sector, making sure that good builders are not burdened unnecessarily and keeping the costs down. HIA and MBV are suggesting that 10 to 30 per cent is the increase in costs that will be attributed to the new bill. That is their figure, not my figure – 10 to 30 per cent in the costs of the running of the body. If the minister has different figures, I am happy to hear them, but that is what they are saying. To my mind, those costs will be sheeted straight home to home owners, to the new construction sector, to the renovation sector, all of that. People will pay more, and it will make homes less affordable.

The community is worried about housing affordability now – worried about the price of homes – so anything that increases the cost is something that we are very cautious about. Our preferred way is to have the proper consultation with the industry and get those key things right: protecting consumers, getting the shonks out of the industry, helping good builders and making sure costs are low.

Jacinta ERMACORA (Western Victoria) (14:50): I am pleased to speak on the bills being debated here in cognate today: the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026 and the Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026. Building or buying a home is the biggest investment most Victorians will ever make, and with the housing affordability crisis, less and less young people in particular are able to purchase a house. It therefore becomes even more important that the one big purchase comes with up-to-date consumer protections and a contemporary regulatory framework. These bills are about making sure that people get what they pay for and that what they have purchased is safe and compliant. For example, when a first home buyer signs on the dotted line for an off-the-plan apartment or house, it means that what gets built will match what was promised. It is for the retiree who puts everything into a new home and expects it to stand or it is simply buying a block of land and building a new home that is located where the plans say it should be and includes the quality quoted and expected by the purchasers.

Trust in the building system is earned through consistent enforcement. One dodgy builder who walks away from shoddy work does not just harm one family, they damage confidence in every builder, every apartment and every new development that comes after them. When combustible cladding is approved and installed or when a dodgy builder cuts corners and walks away, the cost should fall to

the companies and businesses responsible, not the owners and occupiers. But all too often it falls on the person living in the building. It falls as debt, as stress and quite often as years of fighting a system that was supposed to protect consumers in the first place.

In the case of the cladding crisis, the cost fell to owner-occupiers or renters in a devastating way. In June 2017 the Grenfell Tower fire in London killed 72 people. The cladding on that building, made from combustible aluminium-composite panels, turned a contained fire into a catastrophe that climbed 24 storeys. We had already seen the warning signs here in Victoria. The Lacrosse building fire in Melbourne's Docklands in 2014 injured residents and narrowly avoided mass casualties. The same materials – the same failure – installed, with permits issued and inspections signed off. What followed was a state government audit that revealed that hundreds of privately owned residential buildings across Victoria had been constructed with combustible cladding. This was a regulatory failure of monumental proportions, a system that had allowed dangerous products to be imported, specified and installed with official approval. The people left carrying the risk were not the developers who built those buildings; they were the apartment owners, the first home buyers, the renters and the retirees who had purchased in good faith. They were working families who definitely could not afford to rectify. They could not afford to fix it alone. They deserved a government that was prepared to step in, and the Andrews Labor government did exactly that.

The Victorian Cladding Taskforce was established in 2017, and in 2019 it handed down its final report, recommending a dedicated agency. Cladding Safety Victoria was established with a $600 million commitment, later supplemented by a further $109 million in 2023 and $40 million for the cladding remediation partnership program. And the results are real: more than 99 per cent of the highest risk buildings in the rectification program have been remediated. That is over 450 buildings and more than 2000 apartments. More than 38,000 Victorians are safer now than they were six years ago. 130 government-owned and community buildings, including schools and hospitals, have also been made safe. The cladding remediation partnership program has delivered risk mitigation pathways for all 1210 lower risk buildings in the scope. Victoria is the only jurisdiction in the world to have done this. Cladding Safety Victoria also did something rare in public administration by contributing its methodology to the world. The protocols for mitigating cladding risk have been published and shared internationally. Victoria helped other jurisdictions understand how to approach this problem, and I am proud of that legacy, which goes beyond our borders.

The Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026 now formally closes Cladding Safety Victoria as a standalone agency. Its functions, staff and liabilities transfer to the new Building and Plumbing Commission. The specialist knowledge built over six years does not disappear. It is retained inside the regulator that will carry forward any outstanding work. The bill also removes the cladding rectification levy and replaces it with a new lower element of the building permit levy until June 2029. This reduces the levy burden on impacted building classes by between 47 and 66 per cent. Domestic houses and non-metropolitan builds are exempt entirely. That is direct cost relief for builders and consumers made possible because the underlying program is now complete.

But fixing the cladding problem was never going to be enough on its own. The truth is that in over 30 years since the Building Act 1993 was first passed the industry has not been able to police the rogue operators in its midst. A small cohort of dodgy builders has been ripping off consumers, and over time that has eroded community trust in the industry. That erosion has consequences for everyone. It hurts the good builders and the tradies who take pride in their work – those who love nothing more than catching up with an old client and hearing how much they love their home. When trust in the industry falls, their businesses suffer too.

The Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill finalises the establishment of the Building and Plumbing Commission. This is a new, integrated building watchdog with the enforcement powers it needs to weed out those rogue operators. Stronger regulation means Victorians can build, buy and rent with confidence, and more confidence means more people building to buy and invest in off-the-plan apartments and houses, which means more homes are being built.

Building more homes starts with building better quality homes. The Allan Labor government housing agenda depends on both. I note that the opposition has not made it easy to get these reforms through. When working Victorians needed consumer protections debated and passed, the Liberals attempted to delay these proceedings, and it looks like those opposite are again blocking these protections, although I am unclear from what Mr Davis has said. The Liberals usually leave Victorians on their own despite having the chance to come to the table and help us fight for working Victorian homebuyers. After being lobbied by peak bodies representing the domestic building businesses, I was glad to hear Mr Davis say the Liberals will not oppose the bill.

I do believe, though, that we should be wary of Liberal support for this bill. Jess Wilson has announced her plan to make $40 billion in cuts to the public service, cutting one in seven public servant jobs in the process. We know that the Building and Plumbing Commission, which protects working Victorians from dodgy builders, is on Jess Wilson's chopping block. No doubt the new commission is likely to fall into Ms Wilson's back office public sector roles due to be cut. Labor answers to working people. We will keep fighting for them regardless.

Before I close, I want to acknowledge the Cladding Safety Victoria board and its CEO for the leadership that made this program possible: chairperson Rod Fehring; deputy chair Sarah Clarke; board members Genevieve Overell, Jo Pugsley and David Webster; chief executive officer Dan O'Brien; other people that were also in that role; and every member of the staff. It was a very challenging project. You saved building owners hundreds of millions of dollars which they would otherwise have been forced to find themselves. That deserves to be recognised in this chamber.

These two bills together represent what the Allan Labor government stands for. We intervene when the market fails, we fund and fix when consumers have been let down, we follow through on tidying up red tape and streamlining procedures into one unit as a result of the Silver review and we build the stronger regulatory system that makes sure it does not happen again. Tens of thousands of Victorians are safer because of this work, and thousands more will be protected by the stronger watchdog these reforms create. I commend the bill to the house.

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (15:01): I am very pleased to rise to speak on the cognate debate of the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026 and the Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026. Obviously these are two pieces of legislation which further this Labor government's commitment to putting consumers and their rights and their protections at the heart of the building system here in Victoria. That is fundamentally what Labor is seeking to do. We are on the side of those Victorians who are making the biggest purchase of their lives in building a new home. We know that for many of them this is the only time that they will make such a commitment and the only time they will be involved in such a process, and therefore inherently the power imbalances and the knowledge imbalances that exist between those undertaking the works that they are paying for and those consumers themselves are pronounced.

That is why strong consumer protections need to be in place to support Victorians who are building a home, and that is exactly what our reforms to the building system do, because Labor is on the side of those who want to build their own home and Labor is on the side of those Victorians who want home ownership to become a reality for them. That stands in stark contrast to where the Liberals are, because what the Liberals want to do, as evidenced by the reasoned amendment Mr Davis moved today, is to stop and delay these protections. They want to leave Victorians out in the cold when it comes to consumer protections on our building sites.

What was worse than the reasoned amendment that Mr Davis moved today to delay this bill and withdraw it from the notice paper – so that more people, presumably, can be ripped off – was that we had the Leader of the Opposition standing up in the Legislative Assembly today reaffirming her commitment to sack the very public servants who are going to enforce the consumer protections outlined in this bill and sack the employees of the Building and Plumbing Commission. That is exactly what is on the chopping block here in the state of Victoria. That is exactly the choice that is awaiting

Victorians in November. We have got a Liberal leader who wants to swing the axe at the public sector and has specifically named the entities that she has in the firing line, and that includes the VBA, the Victorian Building Authority, which is transitioning to become the Building and Plumbing Commission. What that means is that dodgy builders are going to be able to run rampant over consumers in the state of Victoria because there is going to be no-one there to support them, because Jess Wilson and her public sector hiring freeze will have sacked the lot.

We know that the choice Victorians face in November is between a Labor government that is on their side, supporting consumer protections and strengthening the regulatory and enforcement regime to make sure that they do not get ripped off in the biggest purchase of their lives, and a Liberal Party that wants to delay those new protections, delay the new enforcement and then take an axe to the inspectors and the compliance regime that are out there supporting Victorians. Labor will have support for first home buyers and new home builders; under the Liberals they will be on their own. That is the choice on building that we have before us today.

The first of the two bills that we are in cognate debate on today, the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill, is about shifting the dial on the building system to put consumers at the heart of the protection regime. A new principal act is being created which is going to make the system easier to navigate for consumers, hold dodgy builders to account and make the regulator's activities more transparent. The new principal act that this legislation creates will be centred on a new building system objective which states in law that consumers must always be at the heart of the building and plumbing regulatory system and proposes tough new enforcement powers for that commission, including severe penalties, steep civil penalties, and the ability to hold directors liable for wrongdoing in order to weed out the phoenixing practices that so bedevil parts of the building industry. To ensure that Victorian people have confidence in this system, it will be underwritten by strong transparency measures that will hold the regulator to the high standards that Victorians rightly expect.

It is a bill that backs consumers and that backs those seeking to build a new home, and the Liberal Party wants to stop it. The Liberal Party want to delay it, and then they want to win an election and sack all the building enforcement regulators who will be out there making sure that consumers are not ripped off. I could not imagine a worse approach from a party that want to be in government if they are serious about the interests of both building more homes and protecting consumers. I think it sums up everything about the Liberal Party in the state of Victoria that they do not care that Victorians are being exploited and ripped off by dodgy builders. We are not going to let them enact that plan. We are not going to let them put those seeking to build their dream home at the mercy of dodgy builders here in the state of Victoria.

We know that under Labor not only are we strengthening the protections for those who are seeking to build their own home – not only reforming the old VBA and creating the new Building and Plumbing Commission with consumers at the centre, tougher enforcement and more transparency – but it is part of a broader sweep of policy reform in building and planning that is all about making home ownership more achievable and more affordable here in the state of Victoria. That is our policy goal, and it is working. What we can see in Victoria is a building system that is delivering more homes to more Victorians than any other jurisdiction right across the country. Victoria under Labor is approving, commencing and completing the construction of more homes than any other jurisdiction – more than New South Wales, more than Queensland. In the 12 months to January 2026 Victoria approved nearly 53,000 dwellings. We commenced building more than 55,000 in those 12 months, and we completed over 54,000 homes. That is, as I said, more than New South Wales, more than Queensland and more than any other jurisdiction anywhere in the country. But it did not happen by accident. It is not a coincidence that Victoria is ahead of the pack when it comes to approving, commencing and completing the construction of homes. It is because the Labor government has a policy agenda designed to support it.

We announced in 2023 in our housing statement a range of reforms designed to stop local councils jamming up the planning system and blocking projects because of certain local interests. We have led

the way in ensuring that planning approval is easier to obtain, which lowers the cost of the new constructions that are underway, because we know that in construction time is money, and the longer developers have to hold land before development to get through the planning process, the more those costs are passed on to consumers. The faster we get through the planning process, the lower the cost of the end product, and that is a critical component of the work that is being led in this state by the Labor government to get more homes approved more quickly.

As I said, one of the benefits of the sustained investment that we have been making right across the economy but particularly in the skills and training system is that we have a construction sector that is running above other states in terms of the number of homes that are actually being started and being built. We have a very clear example here in the state of Victoria where a Labor government is facilitating better planning outcomes, investing in supporting the skills in the construction sector and supporting Victorians to get a home, and more are being approved, more being commenced and more being completed than in any other jurisdiction in the nation. What do we have from the Liberal Party? Persistent opposition to progress, using every opportunity to throw a spanner in the works of the construction that is occurring in the state of Victoria – throw a spanner in the works of those young Victorians who want desperately to be able to own their own home in the communities that they love. High and dry on your own under the Liberals or protected and supported under Labor – that is the choice. That is the difference.

This bill today does an exceptionally important job: creating a new principal act for the building sector and creating, in the principal act, the Building and Plumbing Commission, with consumers at the centre, with greater enforcement powers and with more transparency. The second of the two bills being debated in cognate debate today on cladding safety winds up the work of Cladding Safety Victoria and folds it into the new Building and Plumbing Commission. Largely the substantive, significant work that they have done over the last many years has come to the point where that is the appropriate course of action. Under Labor we are going to continue to focus on the interests of consumers, the interests of those who want to own their own home and want to build their own home. We are going to give them the protections in the system that they deserve. The Liberals want to delay those protections, they want to stop those protections and they want to take the axe to the very regulator that is out there to protect them. We are not going to let that happen. We are going to stand on the side of consumers. We are going to stand on the side of those who want the opportunity to own their own home, and under Labor that is what we are delivering.

Aiv PUGLIELLI (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (15:15): I rise to speak on behalf of my Greens colleagues and on my behalf with respect to the two bills that we are debating today in a cognate manner, both of which the Greens will be supporting. Firstly, the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026 we support, as it improves protections for consumers and takes steps forward toward holding dodgy builders, in effect, to account. At a time when we need more homes for people here in this state it is critical that the homes are built well and that in so doing people have reassurance that their homes – that their apartments, for example, in a tower – are built to a good standard and that they are safe and they are not defective. For those who do find themselves taken advantage of by a dodgy builder it is important that they have the recourse available to them to fix their home, to fix whatever defects are apparent and to have the builders or the developers, in whichever case, held to account. This bill will make some of these improvements and will build on the recent buyer protection legislation that has been through this house previously.

One element that I know many people who have had the misfortune of dealing with more dodgy characters within the building sector will definitely appreciate is that this bill seeks to address the issue of companies phoenixing in order to avoid responsibility. There are provisions in the bill that make it harder for company directors to ultimately escape responsibility when their business is found liable for defective work. I know that the vast majority – and I want to put this clearly on record – of builders out there are working hard to do the right thing and to build great homes for people in this state. These increased consumer protections and relevant regulations will not and should not impact them, because

they are not doing the wrong thing. But what I also know is that too many people have been left in awful, stressful and extremely costly, in many examples, situations where it has become apparent that their home has not been built properly or safely. I am glad that we are here today to improve some of these protections. It does, as always, come down to the resourcing of the Building and Plumbing Commission (BPC) to make sure that they have the tools and the resources that they need to complete this work. I hope to see this become reality as the various elements of building reforms, like within this legislation, take effect.

There does appear to be a gap, nonetheless, in the particular reforms that are before us. I very much support the introduction of rectification orders and the changes to domestic building insurance; however, there is a cohort of people that I am aware of who I fear will not be captured by either of those provisions – that is, owners in buildings over three storeys who have identified a defect, who have taken immediate action to rectify this problem and who, having done so already, therefore are not covered by rectification orders here. At this stage the BPC will not be able to issue rectification orders on an urgent basis, and this will mean that some owners and owners corporations (OCs) will find themselves having to fund the works themselves, not being able to access the rectification order scheme. Again, my fear is that we may see this shameful scenario where a group of people are therefore excluded from recourse due to the nature of the defect and the manner in which they promptly responded to it themselves. I would like to have seen further action on that particular matter, and I will raise it in the committee stage of deliberations on the bill. This is something that my colleagues and I will continue to push for to make sure that everyone possible can be covered by the scheme in an appropriate manner one way or another.

Another urgent matter which has been raised with me and my colleagues in various offices in the lower house, for example, is a situation that we see within owners corporations of some of these larger buildings regarding proxy votes. We have heard from a number of people in large apartment towers that their owners corporation meetings are increasingly being co-opted by individuals who hold many, many proxy votes in large towers with hundreds of apartments. I have heard examples of developers or real estate agents securing multiple proxy votes from disengaged owners and therefore taking control effectively of OC meetings for buildings where they do not live or even own an apartment. I acknowledge of course there is still a review of the relevant Owners Corporations Act 2006, which is currently underway, but I see this as a critical matter that really should not wait any longer. I think a number of people in this Parliament would be keen to see those reforms come through. The government has been considering the final report of the review since the end of last year. We need action now.

There are many changes that need to happen to that relevant act to improve things for people living in apartments, but this issue of proxy voting in particular is one that is quite glaring. There are a lot of people, within both my region and those of my lower house colleagues, who would like to see the number of proxy votes that any one person can hold for an owners corporation meeting reduced, while retaining existing limited exemptions such as those regarding family relationships. We see, for example, this 'one person, one proxy' rule being the case for smaller buildings. But when we look at these larger towers – these large buildings with hundreds of apartments that are subject to the legislation before us – where at relevant meetings we see proxies being misused and limited, this idea of limiting proxies per person can go a long way to stop some of this misuse and poor decision-making that results from these meetings, producing results that are far more fair and closely aligned to the wishes of the owners and people who actually live in the building.

To bring one particular matter to the attention of the chamber, for example, there is an instance we have seen in a large apartment building, around a thousand lots. At its owners corporation AGM 33 owners attended in person or online, plus a small number of people holding proxies, whereas one real estate agent attended holding 35 proxies. This meant that the one real estate agent had near control of that meeting and the decisions, despite not owning or even living in a dwelling in that building. So clearly change in that particular area is needed.

I will acknowledge that some of the matters I have just raised are actually beyond the scope of the bill that is before us. However, delaying reform on these matters is having real-world impacts on people who live in the apartments in the towers that are subject to the legislation before us, and it is affecting them each and every day, so that action is desperately needed. Owners corporations are holding meetings to decide on big decisions in their buildings, things like defect rectification – a subject of the legislation before us – being certainly one of these things, and with concentrated proxies continuing to influence this process, owners and residents are not getting their fair say. So that is why I raise it here before us today.

To speak briefly, though, to the Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026, which is subject to this cognate debate, this bill, as I understand, will be wrapping up Cladding Safety Victoria and moving any outstanding work to the BPC. The Greens will be supporting this bill. As my colleague Ellen Sandell, MP for Melbourne in the other place, has already covered, when the issue of flammable cladding was first identified in this state there was a great deal of concern, as would be understandable, from residents, even once funding was announced to address these issues. Many of my colleagues, particularly in the other place, put in a huge amount of effort supporting residents through the complex and lengthy process of remediation. I am pleased to see that we are at a point where the job of addressing high-risk flammable cladding in Victoria has progressed to where it is now. The Lacrosse fire here in Melbourne and the absolutely tragic Grenfell Tower fire in the UK really highlighted systemic failures – these buildings that were not safe, that contained cheap and dangerous flammable material and were effectively putting people directly in harm's way due to these failings.

Removing flammable cladding from buildings across Victoria has no doubt been difficult. There are many owners who will report from their lived experience that the process was long, it was confusing and that funds sometimes covered works and sometimes did not. But again, I am pleased to see that buildings now are in a safer position here in this state, and we can be in the position we are where we are able to see cladding safety staff transferred across directly and retained within the BPC. These are absolutely important matters, and as I have stated, both bills subject to today's cognate debate will be supported by my Greens colleagues and me, and I commend both bills to the house.

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (15:24): I am pleased to rise to speak on these two bills debated in cognate today and acknowledge the previous contributions, especially the contributions of Ms Ermacora and Mr Batchelor, in relation to and in underscoring why this bill is so important. As many others have said, the process of building your own home is one of the most significant financial investments you will make in your life. Certainly for the majority of Victorians that is the case, and this is a government that is focused on doing everything that we can to provide those housing options for young Victorians and for all Victorians as well. Especially when it comes to the building of a new house, which happens quite a lot in electorates such as mine in the thriving growth corridor of the south-east, it is something that is so critical for people and it is something that makes it so important that we get these regulations, these enforcement powers and these instruments for the Building and Plumbing Commission to be as strong and robust as we can.

It is one of the reasons I am pleased to speak in favour of this bill, particularly the provisions in which it will not only combine and correlate different functions of other agencies, including Cladding Safety Victoria, into the Building and Plumbing Commission proper but also the way it will empower the commission to take earlier action, to make those earlier interventions that in the past, under the current legislative and regulatory framework, have meant that where the BPC has acted – and we have seen it act quite a lot – it has sometimes been too late to actually rectify the situation. It is obviously a good thing that we have a strong regulator, and the new BPC is certainly, from all accounts, doing its job. It is one thing to be doing follow-up enforcement action and punishing dodgy builders, but it is perhaps even more beneficial for it to be given those powers at an earlier stage to actually make those early interventions so that a person's individual livelihood cannot be thrown nearly as much off track as would otherwise be the case.

This is also not just about protecting consumers; it is about protecting what I would certainly presume to be the majority of builders who do the right thing by their clients and practise in an ethical and compliant way. They too are undercut by these shonky builders. I have had many people in my electorate come to speak to me about their concerns. Indeed, when I built a house myself, we went through various concerns of our own, including some appalling lapses that should never have been signed off on at the time that we only found out about afterwards. It was a very long and lengthy process to resolve that. I have had one constituent who, two years after their house was complete, is still fighting their builder step by step by step, inch by inch, because at every opportunity every supposed rectification is uncovering further issues – further deficiencies in their build – and they are having to fight their builder every step of the way. So it is really important that we see the Building and Plumbing Commission as strongly empowered as it can be.

I understand not too long ago the commission took significant enforcement action against a builder based in my electorate that had undertaken work on a property just outside my region which featured very prominently on a YouTube channel called *Site Inspections*, which specialises in exposing some of these bad practices across the country and highlighted a local example in the broader east of Melbourne. The Building and Plumbing Commission has taken extreme action, very serious action, as it rightly should have done. It is what we expect from any regulator, but when it comes to that most important decision, the most important financial commitment most of us will make in our lives, it is particularly important that Victorians can have that confidence. It is a confidence that is not a nice-to-have; it is essential, because we are trying to encourage and provide those opportunities for young people to buy or build their own home, wherever it is they want to live in this state – in the regions, in the inner city, or indeed in growing outer communities like the ones I am very proud to represent in the south-east of Melbourne. We do offer a great quality of life, and I do come into this place and talk fairly ad nauseam about all the many great things that are happening in communities such as Berwick and Clyde North and Cranbourne and Botanic Ridge and many others like them in the south-east. But to have that dream undermined by a shonky builder is of course going to impair confidence and is of course going to deter many, many people from having that faith to invest in and make that big decision.

The legislation before us today builds on what has already been done with the Building and Plumbing Commission, coalescing various other functions into it and providing that one-stop shop for consumers in particular. It means that we are giving every bit of power that we can to this commission to do its job as thoroughly and properly as it can. Whilst we are focused on that, I do notice that those opposite are focused on stripping away from it. The Liberals' list of agencies they wish to cut was released just a few days ago. A detailed list was given to both the *Herald Sun* and *Age* newspapers outlining Cladding Safety Victoria as one of their targets as well as – what I presume they intended to write – the Building and Plumbing Commission. They actually wrote 'Building and Pluming Commission'. Unless both newspapers just happened to make the same typo, I suspect the Liberals probably gave them a list. I find it particularly ironic that the party which is so expert at leaking against each other cannot spell the word 'plumbing'. But there you are; that is in their list of cuts. The building and pluming commission, or the Building and Plumbing Commission, whichever way the Liberals want to call it, is on their list of cuts. They say that this is not front line, but really, if you are a Victorian going out and building your home, you want to have the surety – the peace of mind – that the regulator in charge of making sure that your largest single financial investment is being handled properly is well funded, not stripped away as the Liberals would seek to do, as evidenced by the Building and Plumbing Commission's presence on their list of cuts. As Mr Batchelor said, it is in complete contradiction to what those of us on this side are seeking to do.

I do want to also briefly address some remarks made by Mr Davis in this debate in relation to housing. He specifically talked about Clyde South and the various ongoing rollouts of that precinct structure plan (PSP), which is taking a fair while. I think it is really important to draw on a few points here. Whilst the plan released by the Minister for Planning and current Attorney-General, with various other roles as well, in *Plan for Victoria* does certainly have ambitious outer suburban land releases, and there is much happening in the vicinity, including Cardinia Creek South stage 2, which has just recently

been released as well, and there are continuing land releases that we are doing, I think it is really curious to see the Liberals come into this place, Mr Davis in particular, and talk about Clyde South, basically saying, from what I can infer from his speech, that we should be opening up 20,000 homes with no plan for infrastructure and no plan for services. This is the same Liberal Party that comes in this place and complains about things not being done. As a member of this region I am proud of the investments that we are making, but I am also one of the first to admit that we are doing a lot but we are barely keeping pace with the population growth in the existing areas of Clyde North that are being built right now.

Take the suburb of Clyde North, for example. I could talk about the community hospital, I could talk about the roads, I could talk about the bus routes, but I want to talk about the schools – six new schools that we have built and opened in the past three years alone in the suburb of Clyde North, which is, incidentally, more than the Liberals built in the entire state of Victoria in their last term of government. We have built more in just one suburb. There are these six schools, and there are two more new schools announced in the budget this year for Clyde North in the coming couple of years. Two of those schools that are open have already well over 1000 students in their enrolments. The area is booming. We are putting these investments in, but we are running to keep where we are.

Meanwhile if you look at the school enrolment data for somewhere like Boroondara, you will actually see that it is falling – falling by the thousands – over a medium-term period. So it is remarkable then that Mr Davis comes in and complains about our record on housing. It is actually him who is coming into this place week in, week out – he did it this morning in fact, in notices of motion – to complain about the very planning mechanisms that we are reforming so that more people can build or buy, not just in my electorate but in inner-city Melbourne too, in areas where we have the transport infrastructure and we have the school resources. The capacity is certainly there. We have that evidence from the Department of Education – over 10,000 spaces of capacity across an inner ring of Melbourne. That capacity is sitting there, but it is not being used, because people like Mr Davis and his fellow NIMBY friends have been for far too long in control of the planning controls and stopping young people from having that opportunity to live in, for example, Camberwell or Kew or Brighton or Malvern. 'Housing for me, but not for thee' – that is the mantra of Mr Davis, and that is what he brings into this place, day in, day out, with his NIMBY agenda to keep people out of homes in his electorate. It is not good enough then for him to just turn around and say, 'Well, just unlock Clyde South, just unlock it, 20,000 homes,' with no plan for that infrastructure and those services – infrastructure and services that you might get to enjoy in your community, Mr Davis, but you are withholding that opportunity from young people. It is absolutely egregious and outrageous to be coming into this place day after day blocking housing, blocking planning reforms.

Mr Davis said the government has not acted in this space. That is certainly not the case. We have done the thing that many experts have said governments have the most control over. The one thing that they all say is state government's ability to affect this issue comes through planning controls. These are the levers we are pulling. We do not have nearly as much capacity to affect build costs as other levels of government may do. As a state government, the number one thing that we can do is planning controls, as has been said by many housing and urban policy experts. We are pulling those levers and making those reforms, and at every step of the way Mr Davis comes into this place and says, 'No, not in my backyard.' Today he says it is fine and we can just open up 20,000 houses in Clyde South. We are progressing the PSP in Clyde South and in other places, but what we will not do is an open-slather free-for-all with no plan for investment, no plan for services and no plan for infrastructure. As far as Mr Davis is concerned, as long as he has got what he wants in his inner-city community, anyone else can go jump, because that is what we have with the so-called modern Liberal Party that deigns to pretend to lecture the Labor Party on housing policy when they are the ones who at every opportunity are blocking housing, blocking activity centres, blocking the townhouse code and doing everything they can.

We saw an inquiry last year that Mr Davis sought to use to fabricate an excuse for him to attack and seek to revoke planning rules. Meanwhile he says, 'Whilst we want to keep what we have in my suburb, you can all live in Clyde South, I don't care.' You have not brought forward a single discussion about buses, about schools, about roads, about hospitals for that part of the world. All you care about is that they are not living in your backyard. It is what we see week in, week out, time after time from Mr Davis and from the Liberal Party. I talk to people, unlike Mr Davis, and I would genuinely offer to bring him out to my electorate to talk to some of these people. I talk to people in my electorate, and they are very, very clear that they are happy to see development, the growth. They understand it needs to take place, but they are frankly sick and tired of their region, the outer suburbs of Melbourne, taking far more than our fair share of the housing growth in this state. They do not want to see another five suburbs built on the end of their commute – that is going to add to more traffic – without any plan to address the infrastructure problems and the services that those communities will need.

They do not want to see more laissez-faire development the way that Mr Davis would see it in the outer suburbs. It might suit him to keep his little pocket in the inner city, but it is not going to help my constituents in the outer south-east. What will help is doing both: releasing new greenfields land but also aggressively developing and allowing sensible, responsible development around activity centres, not the sort of ridiculously hysterical comments that Mr Davis has been making again today about dogboxes. Indeed, this is where we come back to the topic at hand, which is the Building and Plumbing Commission, and ensuring that we actually are building sustainable –

David Davis interjected.

Michael GALEA: Mr Davis, on this side we are very clear that we do want to provide housing for young people, so it is outrageous for you to be in here claiming that you want to see housing when all you want to do is push it to the outskirts where it is not in your view, not in your backyard and you can keep your nice low-rise street a few k's out from the city.

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (15:39): I also would like to say a few words on the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026 being debated in cognate with the Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026. I would say from the outset that I agree with Mr Davis that this is a doorstopper of a bill. It is a very large bill, so I will not cover everything in it at all. But what I will say is this: the Libertarian Party agrees with what the government is trying to do in principle here. It is clear that there are problems with dodgy builders and regulating this, and I hope that what the government is intending to do here by fixing that will result in good outcomes. But I will say from the outset that unfortunately it has become typical of this government that they always do things that infringe on rights.

I have said a number of times in here that I am sick of seeing these bills come into this place where they give yet more warrantless powers of search, entry and seizure, and we will not be supporting any more bills that do that. Unfortunately, this bill is one of those bills that does that. Indeed, in clauses 94, 176, 264 and 266 it does exactly that. It gives expanded powers of entry without warrant or reasonable person tests. So the Libertarian Party will be opposing the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill. However, we do not have any problem with the Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill, and therefore we will not be opposing that.

It would appear that the Libertarian Party is not the only one to have concerns about these infringements on rights. In fact the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee –

David Davis interjected.

David LIMBRICK: Yes, the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee did some very detailed work on this, and I note that there were a number of questions put to the minister. I am not aware that the minister has responded. Maybe the minister can respond in summing up to some of these questions. SARC actually had some concerns where they queried the rights under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. They had concerns that the application of subclause 176(1)(a) to

residential buildings on land may trespass unduly upon rights or freedoms – for example, powers of entry. Also clauses 264 and 266 potentially trespass unduly upon rights and freedoms – again, entry and search with consent. Subclause 249(1) trespasses unduly upon rights or freedoms against self-incrimination and self-exposure to penalties – so the right to not incriminate oneself. Again, operation of the charter for subclause 176(1)(a) – powers of protection from liability. Presumption of innocence in clause 314 et cetera – it goes on and on and on. Basically, as Mr Davis pointed out, SARC also did a doorstopper of a response to this outlining many of the potential conflicts with human rights of this bill. I see that as a big problem.

Another issue that I have with this bill is around the cladding levy, which will disappear and be absorbed into this. Again, this is going to prove the statement – I think it was Milton Friedman's statement – that there is nothing as permanent as a temporary tax. So we have that as well. The Libertarian Party will be opposing this for those reasons. Notwithstanding that, I do appreciate that the problems that this bill is trying to address are real problems. I hope that the intent of the government is realised here, but again, we do not support going through these infringements of people's rights in order to achieve policy objectives.

Sheena WATT (Northern Metropolitan) (15:43): Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak in strong support of the Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026 and the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026 in this cognate debate. This legislative package represents significant reforms for the construction industry. For most of us, building or buying a home is the single biggest investment we will ever make. It is an investment built on decades of hard work, savings and sacrifice. Yet for too long a small cohort of dodgy builders has been allowed to turn that dream into a nightmare, leaving families to deal with debilitating debt, heartbreak and extraordinary stress.

The Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026 marks a milestone we should all be proud of, signalling the successful completion of the world-leading rectification program. This agency was established to protect our community following the harrowing Lacrosse tower fire in Docklands and the catastrophic Grenfell Tower fire in London. We all remember the footage from 2014, where noncompliant aluminium-composite cladding was set ablaze and spread 13 storeys in sheer minutes. It was a stark moment that proved our regulatory systems required urgent intervention. Successive Labor governments funded Cladding Safety Victoria to keep 150,000 Victorian homes safe, and by the time CSV is wound down it will have made 83,000 homes safer. It is on track to substantially complete its programs by June of 2026, at which time rectification works will have been completed on nearly 450 private residential apartment buildings and 132 government owned and community housing buildings. Our public use buildings are safer because of the work of CSV, like our hospitals, our schools, our sporting venues – places that millions of Victorians use every year. Because CSV has done its job, we are now able to repeal the cladding rectification levy, which will slash overall building levy costs by up to 66 per cent, putting money back in the pockets of homebuyers – exactly where it belongs. I want to extend my deep thanks to the entire team at CSV for their tireless work in protecting our state.

As we wind down one chapter of building safety, we must strengthen the next. This is where the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill comes in. For too long a small cohort of dodgy builders has been allowed to rip off consumers and erode trust in an industry where the vast majority of tradies work with immense pride and professionalism. When homebuyers are left to fight dodgy work on their own, they face debilitating debt and heartbreak. This bill finalises the establishment of our new integrated watchdog, the Building and Plumbing Commission (BPC) – which I spoke about during its introduction – and provides us with the necessary enforcement powers to weed out dodgy builders, and by 'us' I mean the state of Victoria.

At the heart of this new system is the building system objective. For the first time our laws will explicitly state that consumers must always be at the heart of the building and plumbing regulatory system. This is not just a minor change of language but a complete reorientation of the building system

to place people first. One of the most insidious practices in the building industry is phoenixing. We have all heard stories of builders liquidating their businesses, only to appear a week later under a new name and with the same assets but no liability. This bill ends that. We are introducing director liability, allowing the BPC to issue a declared director notice that makes company directors, jointly and severally, liable for compliance. If you are a director of a company that rips off Victorians, you can no longer hide behind a corporate structure to avoid accountability. To back this up, we are introducing a civil penalty regime with fines of up to $600,000 for individuals. Courts will now be able to strip companies of the profits they made by cutting corners and disregarding safety. This is supported by ancillary orders such as adverse publicity orders. Reputation is everything for a builder, and homebuyers deserve to know if the person they are trusting with their entire life savings has a history of doing the wrong thing by their customers.

None of this happens without hard work and advocacy by the workers and unions, who have been calling for a fairer, safer industry for years. Our tradies take immense pride in showing off a house that they helped build. They are the ones on the tools every day, building the homes our state needs. I have got to say that pride carries on for many, many years, even decades. I have great pride in some of my memories of my uncle, who was a master builder. As he drives around places where he built homes he loves to point out the complexities in the work, the apprentice that came up on that site and how they managed to work in some great design elements to make that a beautiful home.

This bill supports the vast majority of builders and plumbers who do the right thing by driving out the rogue operators who undercut good businesses. I know this all too well from my own family experience. Can I just take a moment to honour the enormous legacy of my uncle Raymond Watt, who is a builder of such esteem and standing that I think our state will have homes built by him for many, many generations to come. I know how much pain it caused him personally when he saw a builder next door do the wrong thing. To you, my uncle, I am speaking to your experience and the stories that you shared with me about the pride that you have in your work, and I hope that this bill helps to eliminate some of those rogue operators. It also is a bill that introduces criminal offences to protect authorised persons at the commission from abuse or assault while they carry out their vital work. Labor is the party of working people and will always stand by the workers calling for a safer, more professional industry.

I could take a moment to talk about the opposition's woeful, woeful history in this, but other speakers I am sure might go on to it. But I will say this is a party, those opposite, who have spoken about the need for action to protect consumers, yet their party has refused to publicly support this bill before us, and they have no plans or principles on this issue. They will speak against dodgy builders when they think they can leverage their constituents' suffering for a few extra votes, but they will happily move against regulatory reform when the hard choices need to be made. I have seen recently senior Liberals on the back of a ute campaigning against more homes in their electorates, but the truth is that the Allan Labor government, by contrast, is delivering more affordable homes for working Victorians by boosting supply, particularly through the $6.3 billion Big Housing Build and the Regional Housing Fund. Victoria is approving, commencing and completing more homes than New South Wales and Queensland because our planning reforms are working.

Can I just say I am going to come back to the bill, but I want to talk about phoenixing and the hurt that it causes out there. What it does, this bill, is it provides for a consistent disciplinary framework for all licensed and registered persons. To protect consumers this bill provides expanded powers to suspend a licensed person with immediate effect for severe matters, such as performing work that poses a serious risk to health and safety. We are ensuring the commission acts in the public interest by introducing new eligibility requirements, including a ban on industry lobbyists from serving as commissioners, and I cannot tell you how much I absolutely support that one. These reforms are keeping more money in working people's pockets and protecting them from that extraordinary, extraordinary stress.

Of course I have more to say on this – and I always do – but the truth is that under this government, working people will continue to get affordable, safe, high-quality homes that they deserve. We have built more homes every year since coming to government than those opposite did in their highest years of builds. We are exempting first home buyers from stamp duty for homes up to $600,000. We have banned underquoting. We are making real estate agents disclose actual sale prices. We are moving towards a future where every Victorian can have confidence in the biggest and most important investment they will ever make. You are either with the working families of Victoria or you are with the rogue builders who have exploited them for far too long. You are either with the tradies who want a professional industry or with the cowboys who tarnish their reputation. We will always put families first, and we will not leave them to fend for themselves in an unsafe building system. I, with great pride, commend these bills to the house.

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (15:53): I rise today to speak on the Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026 and the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026 consecutively. Before I go into the substance of these bills I would like to speak to the remarkable work of Cladding Safety Victoria (CSV) and the profound change that it has made to the lives of Victorians across this state, making our state a safer place to live and giving greater security to those seeking to purchase property, knowing that the risks of a building burning down have been either managed or removed. Cladding Safety Victoria is an agency established to protect building occupants from the very real and serious dangers of combustible cladding. It has been instrumental in transforming the safety landscape of our built environment and delivering enduring protections to thousands of Victorian residents and building occupants across the state. It brought together expertise across building assessments, risk classifications, project management and stakeholder engagement to develop and implement a comprehensive approach to cladding rectification. This was far from a simple task. It required the agency to engage with building owners, navigate complex legal and regulatory frameworks, coordinate with fire services and local councils and develop new technical approaches to cladding safety standards. Through the cladding remediation partnership program, for instance, the agency was able to provide all in-scope buildings assessed with lower cladding risks with a pathway to remediation. The partnership program also provided local councils with a consistent framework to support owners of these buildings to mitigate cladding risks at the lowest cost and satisfy any enforcement notices issued by the municipal building surveyor. This reduced the burden on both individual owners and local government and ensured that accountability and action went hand in hand.

Working in partnership with building owners, owners corporations and Fire Rescue Victoria, Cladding Safety Victoria has completed remediation of more than 99 per cent of the high-risk buildings in the cladding rectification program, with the remaining buildings to be completed this year. Let me repeat that: 99 per cent. That figure alone speaks volumes to the amount of work that the agency has done to keep Victorians safe. On top of that, the agency has also worked to remove the cladding risks on 130 government-owned and community buildings, including schools, hospitals and buildings of cultural significance. These are real, tangible results which demonstrate the value of bringing practical solutions to deal with problems before they develop into disasters. This is what responsible, prudent and proactive governments do.

One group of people who will benefit from this significantly will be the first home buyers in this state. Buying a home is complicated enough as it is, and it is often the single most significant financial decision that a family will make. One reason why fixing the issue of combustible cladding is important is because when somebody is looking to buy a home, they should be able to take for granted that the building is safe and well built. Homebuyers should not be placed at risk because of unsafe materials. Having a building should not be something for which you have to shop around, do your research and become an expert on construction materials. Homebuyers should feel secure that the place they are buying will be safe and that every measure has been taken to ensure that it will not expose them to any unreasonable risks. For a government which is taking the issue of home ownership more seriously than any other state government, this is just another reason why we can be proud of the work we have

done through Cladding Safety Victoria. Both the purchasers and the sellers of existing properties will benefit from the greater security and greater certainty which it provides them.

Furthermore, Cladding Safety Victoria's contributions have extended well beyond Victoria's borders and into the international community. The agency has played a leading role in advancing global knowledge of combustible cladding risks and has developed its own groundbreaking evidence-based methodology to identify, assess, clarify and treat combustible cladding risks. This was a product of years of careful research and field experience, and as a result, protocols are mitigating cladding risks, which has reduced remediation costs for building owners. Published online and shared worldwide with other practitioners and policymakers, Victoria's approach has been studied and cited by governments and agencies in other jurisdictions grappling with the same challenges. Cladding Safety Victoria's staff have contributed to international forums and knowledge-sharing initiatives that have developed and helped raise the standard of cladding risk management globally. This is a remarkable achievement, and the scale of such work should not be underestimated. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank CSV chairperson Rod Fehring, deputy chairperson Sarah Clarke, Genevieve Overell, Jo Pugsley, David Webster and CEO Dan O'Brien, along with all the staff members who contributed to Cladding Safety Victoria over its course. Victoria is much safer because of their efforts. With that, Acting President, I will commend both bills to the house.

Tom McINTOSH (Eastern Victoria) (15:58): It is a pleasure to stand and support this bill, because we are here protecting Victorians against dodgy builders. When you have got Victorians making perhaps the single biggest investment in their life, they should get good-quality buildings. It is as simple as that. Our tradies here in Victoria are absolutely world-class. With the licensing and the regulations that they work to, you get quality outcomes. Of course if the Liberals and the Nationals had it their way, it would be all stripped away. You just give anyone a hammer: 'Let it go, have a swing and let's see what happens.' Give people a set of pliers. We know that when we invest in our tradespeople, when we invest in the regulations that they work under and the training that they have, we get better outcomes. You do not have what the Liberals and Nationals would want, with lives shattered, with unsafe workplaces and with unsafe homes. If you go down that path, the costs escalate.

Poor work leads to billions of dollars in costs, whether that is insurance costs, whether that is the costs of people's legal fees – let alone the time that is absorbed when people try to fight dodgy builders – or whether it is the detriment of the wellbeing of people trying to fight their way through. This is why this legislation is so important and so beneficial, to ensure that there are steeper penalties so that the Building and Plumbing Commission can get after people doing the wrong thing and ensure that those that are doing the right thing can be there doing the work, winning the jobs and building people quality homes. The BPC can compel dodgy operators to answer questions and ensure they cannot hide away. There will be more power for improvement and infringement notices so we can get onto things fast before things blow out and get after those dodgy operators that are trying to phoenix. I am very proud to support this legislation and to be supporting well-trained proud tradespeople building quality homes for Victorians and getting the cowboys out of this industry. Talking of cowboys, here comes one now, so I will leave my contribution there.

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (16:00): Mr Davis, I am glad you are here, because there might be a number of things that I can address in summing up on this debate to perhaps give you a bit of clarity and set a number of things in context. Firstly, thank you to everybody who has contributed to the debate and discussion on these two bills. I want to take us back to the point in time in October 2024 when we made a very clear indication that we were going to establish a new, stronger regulator. This bill, the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026, is part of continuing that work. The bill simply completes that process by legally establishing the regulator and its powers. The transition, as I said, is already underway with the Victorian Building Authority trading as the Building and Plumbing Commission (BPC). Back in March last year the building statement that we released reinforced the direction that we were taking, confirming not only the new regulator, the Building and

Plumbing Commission, but also a modern legislative model with clearer administration and enforcement frameworks. Since then, over the course of last year and this year, there has been wideranging consultation on key elements of the framework. We have had many conversations and discussions in this place with stakeholders and over the journey with and for and by the Building and Plumbing Commission.

I am going to address a number of the contributions that have been made in this place. In particular I might take us to Mr Davis and his remarks in relation to the volume of this particular bill and the work that has gone into getting us to this point. The vast majority of the content of this bill – and it is voluminous – relates to transitional processes and detail. There was concern raised about this bill being an undue increase on the burden on industry, and as a result of that Mr Davis has proposed by way of the reasoned amendment:

> That all the words after 'That' be omitted and replaced with 'the bill be withdrawn and not reintroduced until the government has allowed for proper consultation with the industry to occur.'

That is effectively a proposal by the opposition to kick the can down the road. Mr Davis referred to it as a pause but then in the same contribution said that the opposition will not oppose the bill that we are introducing, and he has indicated that the opposition will not stand in the way of this particular bill and its passage. That is a welcome relief, noting of course that the opposition opposed the buyer protection legislation and that that debate was an interesting, I think, betrayal of the coalition's faith and their effort and energy being put behind consumers – and it is indeed consumers that are at the heart of these reforms.

We have heard so many quotes from building business representatives over the course of these contributions. We have heard claims of ambiguity around the benefit that these changes will deliver, so I want to address that in being very, very clear. The fact that the opposition, purporting to speak on behalf of industry, cannot see the clear need to protect working Victorians in the building industry actually just shows and puts on the record whose side they are on and who they are leaving behind.

As many speakers have made abundantly clear from the government benches and indeed the crossbenches, we need to make sure that Victorian consumers, that buyers have that protection to ensure that what they put their money behind, in the biggest purchase of their lifetime, is something that is going to be what they pay for, and that in the event that it is not, there are going to be remedies that apply and processes that can be activated in order to ensure that they get a measure of protection that for too long has been missing from our building industry.

I also want to make it very clear, as I did in this place when we were debating and discussing the buyer protections legislation: the vast majority of builders take enormous pride and care in their work. They deploy their skill and their expertise and their passion to what they produce every single day, often over decades. They take enormous care. They operate safely and effectively. This bill, these changes, this reform, is about ensuring that we are able to act on and that consumers are able to seek remedy for bad behaviour. Just because the vast majority of builders do the right thing does not mean that we should not take action to create a system that applies enforcement mechanisms for that small proportion of the industry that does not.

This bill, in effect, gives Victorian buyers the confidence that they need to make that single largest purchase. I do want to touch on affordability. We have heard a lot about affordability of housing here in this chamber in the course of this debate and indeed over a very long period of time. I would encourage anybody who has questions about the comparative affordability of Melbourne, in houses and in units and apartments, to go and have a look at the data. Whether it is to buy a home or to rent a home, we are comparatively more affordable here in Melbourne than in other major cities – to buy and to rent.

David Davis interjected.

Harriet SHING: Mr Davis, I am going to pick you up on that interjection. You said, 'Well, people don't think that.' Mr Davis, the reason perhaps that some people do not think that is because you keep ignoring the reality and the facts that because of the work that we have done here in Victoria to increase supply, to meet that demand, to provide support for first home owners and protections for people through residential rentals reform, it is more affordable, it is more secure, it is more accessible to buy or to rent a home. That is not to say that there is not further work to do, particularly when we think about how wages have not kept pace with property prices. We all know who it is that proposes that we put a dampener and put the brakes on wage growth. We all know who opposes an increase to minimum wages, and we all know that help with the cost of living is of essential importance in making sure that people can pay the bills. That is where there are a range of initiatives that are intended to do precisely that, intended to get two incomes into a household where previously there may only have been one, to assist with the cost of child care, to help with working from home, to help people to gain a qualification and to assist people with being able to access everything from cut-price registration – 20 per cent off – to free public transport until the end of May and half price from June until the end of the year. There are also the sorts of supports we have had with the first home buyers equity fund that helped more than 11,000 people in Victoria to get into home ownership, now translated into the Help to Buy scheme federally. We need to make sure that these initiatives sit alongside building reform that truly puts consumers at its heart.

To the size and complication issue. In the first instance, the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill brings together a really disparate system, as it relates to building legislation, into the one place. That is why the transitional arrangements are so voluminous, and in doing so, it actually makes the process simpler for practitioners and consumers alike. The bill itself also ensures that we are in a position to be able to provide ongoing discussion on the work that the Building and Plumbing Commission undertakes. Engagement, as it has happened to date, has leveraged the expertise of standing advisory groups to the minister and to the commissioner and CEO of the Building and Plumbing Commission Anna Cronin, with several briefings throughout last year and this year.

These reforms do not increase the burden on builders and plumbers who are doing the right thing. These reforms actually improve the system that exists around those who are doing the right thing. It leaves those who are doing the right thing without the burden of having to shoulder responsibility for the very small minority of builders who do the wrong thing, in many instances through ignorance, but in some instances by design. We need to make sure that we have a strengthened administration and enforcement side of the system, meaning that the regulator is better equipped to act rather than imposing new substantive compliance requirements on those who are already meeting their obligations. Again, builders and plumbers who are doing the right thing should experience less friction, not more, because that enforcement is targeted at bad actors and the expectations are made clear and consistent. The bill lifts the performance of the regulator and not the burden on those good industry participants. It creates a fairer, more level playing field for those already meeting the rules.

The opposition has asked for confirmation that the repeal of the cladding rectification levy and building permit levy adjustments will not affect smaller homes. Mr Davis, I can confirm that these changes will not affect class 1 buildings – that is, buildings of three storeys or less. The information sought by Mr Davis about how cladding risks will be managed forward can perhaps be assisted by reference to the fact that Victorians will continue to be protected from the harms of combustible cladding, even after Cladding Safety Victoria completes its work as planned. When the wind-down occurs, CSV staff and assets will be integrated into the Building and Plumbing Commission to allow completion of any cladding safety-related trailing activities. A trailing team of designated CSV staff will finalise those activities as they relate to the cladding rectification program and will facilitate completion of cladding rectification works on the final buildings in the program. It will also undertake completion of defects liabilities periods on buildings subject to funded rectification works and tasks required to successfully close CSV as an organisation. As part of the transition from CSV to the BPC, the knowledge and information base that CSV has built over six years of its operation will be transferred and managed appropriately, and that is to ensure that knowledge remains available to local councils, building practitioners and Victorians in the communities.

Victorians cannot wait any longer, though, for these reforms, and delay in the terms proposed by the opposition would only set back a reform that has been publicly communicated since 2024 and progressively implemented since that time. We have seen numerous opposition speakers get to their feet in this place and in the other place talking about the lack of remedy for people whose builders have died, disappeared or become insolvent – people whose hearts have been broken, their wallets emptied and their bank accounts drained. This is exactly why we are taking this action and so therefore to delay it would mean to deny consumers the protections that those opposite have called for. This is where, again, we will continue the work to deliver these reforms. I am glad to hear that the opposition will in fact vote in favour of these bills, that the opposition will be supporting these bills. We are looking forward to continuing the path of reform again in a way that recognises all of the good work that happens across the state, as well as ensuring that there are standards that apply to those who do not. What I want to do is to underscore the effort that is –

Members interjecting.

Sonja Terpstra: On a point of order, Acting President, there is a constant stream of unruly interjections that are coming from that side of the chamber, and I would ask that the minister be allowed to continue in silence.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jeff Bourman): Interjections are unruly. If the minister could continue without help, please.

Harriet SHING: We are determined to continue to support the Building and Plumbing Commission to support the work that is being undertaken, transformational work by Anna Cronin, the CEO, who was part of that transition, who we have –

Wendy Lovell interjected.

Harriet SHING: All right, Ms Lovell, I am going to take you up on that interjection. You are talking about what Ms Cronin has cleaned up. I could not agree with you more, because we have funded and resourced the Building and Plumbing Commission, Ms Cronin, to do her valuable work. We have done that, and you are recognising that we have done that. So thank you, Ms Lovell, for that endorsement of the work that we are doing. We will continue with these reforms because we know that they are important. It is a shame that the opposition sought earlier to oppose buyer protections legislation, and we are looking forward, again, to a spirit of collegiality, given that the opposition has now indicated that it will support both of these bills. I am looking forward to an opportunity to answer questions in the course of committee, but I self-evidently confirm that the government will not be supporting the amendment proposed by Mr Davis.

Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026

Second reading

Council divided on amendment:

Ayes (14): Melina Bath, Gaelle Broad, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Bev McArthur, Joe McCracken, Nick McGowan, Evan Mulholland, Richard Welch

Noes (25): Ryan Batchelor, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Jeff Bourman, Katherine Copsey, Enver Erdogan, Jacinta Ermacora, David Ettershank, Michael Galea, Anasina Gray-Barberio, Shaun Leane, David Limbrick, Sarah Mansfield, Tom McIntosh, Rachel Payne, Aiv Puglielli, Georgie Purcell, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Jaclyn Symes, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell, Sheena Watt

Amendment negatived.

Council divided on motion:

Ayes (38): Ryan Batchelor, Melina Bath, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Jeff Bourman, Gaelle Broad, Katherine Copsey, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Enver Erdogan, Jacinta Ermacora, David Ettershank, Michael Galea, Anasina Gray-Barberio, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, Shaun Leane, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Sarah Mansfield, Bev McArthur, Joe McCracken, Nick McGowan, Tom McIntosh, Evan Mulholland, Rachel Payne, Aiv Puglielli, Georgie Purcell, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Jaclyn Symes, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell, Sheena Watt, Richard Welch

Noes (1): David Limbrick

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Committed.

Committee

Clause 1 (16:26)

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Just a few questions from me. Looking at the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026, I understand that rectification orders can be issued on works that have been completed within the last 10 years, being valid for any buildings that had a final approval residency permit issued within that 10-year period. With respect to the design of this legislation, Minister, was it the government's intention that developers may avoid liability within the 10-year period in the instance where consumers were proactive and had fixed defects that had to be fixed for safety or compliance or continued use of the building? Was that avoidance of liability intentional?

Harriet SHING: The short answer is no. That is not actually part of this bill. I think that probably relates more to the buyer protections legislation, and we covered that in some detail when we went through the committee stage. I am very happy to go through some of the detail, if you would like, but in essence there will be situations where home owners need to urgently address building defects and seek to be reimbursed for these costs. Rectification orders, though, are not dealt with in this particular bill. They have gone through with the buyer protections legislation, and they are anticipated to commence on 1 July after we have finalised those regulations, which were recently released for public consultation. Rectification orders as such will not allow for reimbursement, but an owner could make a claim for these costs under the new first-resort home warranty scheme – for those who have purchased cover from 1 July this year – and that will generally apply to homes with a rise of storeys of three or less. Subject to any limitations and exclusions, urgent works by the owner would be claimable as a loss arising from or in connection with defective or noncompliant building work. But it is important to note that in emergencies the owner would first need the Building and Plumbing Commission's approval to carry out urgent works, and the BPC will have a customer service assistance phone line when the first-resort home warranty scheme starts on 1 July this year. But rectification orders are not designed to respond to emergency scenarios. The powers to respond to incidents that pose an immediate danger to life, safety or health are actually vested in municipal building surveyors.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Can I ask, specifically with respect to buildings that are three storeys or above, those larger apartment tower type dwellings, what recourse is available to consumers who fall within those particular circumstances? What recourse is available for people in those circumstances where they are in those larger buildings above three storeys?

Harriet SHING: That, Mr Puglielli, is where the developer bond would apply. So that is the 2 per cent that was covered off in the buyer protections legislation committee stage and in the course of that bill and its passage.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Just for the avoidance of any doubt – say, for those of us that have been contacted by constituents, for example, in these sorts of circumstances – who should they be going to, and what should they be reporting to make sure that they can seek recourse for any works that have had to be undertaken within their building?

Harriet SHING: The Building and Plumbing Commission.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: In the future will the BPC have capacity to issue rectification orders quickly in the instance that a defect needs to be urgently rectified?

Harriet SHING: Rectification orders are not designed to respond to emergency situations, as I have just outlined to you. Powers to respond to those incidents do sit with municipal building surveyors. There are steps that need to be undertaken prior to the commission issuing a rectification order, and they include investigation and also engagement with the practitioner. The circumstances are anticipated to vary really widely and will impact upon the timing of what occurs in an individual circumstance.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: That investigation period – is there a timeline in some respect that you can update the house with?

Harriet SHING: Again, it will depend upon the type of rectification order being sought. Again, I just want to be really clear around the fact that they are not intended to respond to emergency scenarios. That has been part of the ongoing consultation and discussion around administration and enforcement and what that framework looks like, but this is part of the first-resort insurance regulations. They are not in this bill, and they have in fact been gazetted today.

David DAVIS: I just have a handful of questions that I want to ask. Clause 155 – it might just be convenient to deal with these in the purposes clause – bans a domestic builder who has entered into a major domestic building contract from appointing a private building surveyor. Paragraph 155(2)(c) extends this ban to a director of the builder if the builder is a company, or a business partner of the builder. My question is: what happens if the director or business partner is the actual owner of the land on which the home will be built? For example, a builder who may want to build their own home or want to appoint a private building surveyor. Or is it the case that they will be forced to engage the municipal building surveyor whether one is available or not?

Harriet SHING: That is quite an intricate question. I am just getting some further detail from the advisers. I can perhaps flag that we will put a placeholder on it and come back.

David DAVIS: Further, clause 188 replaces section 128 of the Building Act 1993. It provides a building surveyor with immunity from liability if they rely in good faith on a certificate given to them by a registered building practitioner or endorsed engineer. Unlike the Building Act, there is a provision stating that if the building surveyor would be liable for the immunity, then the person who issued the certificate has liability attached to them. What is the purpose of this provision? Why is it needed? If the certificate was incorrect, surely there would already be liability for the person who issued the certificate.

Harriet SHING: You have asked a question about the way in which liabilities will operate and the new civil liabilities of company officers. Clauses 315 and 316 are the ones that are relevant there that will apply to officers of bodies corporate if a body corporate contravenes a specified civil penalty provision and the officer fails to exercise due diligence to prevent the body corporate's contravention, as well as those new liabilities that apply in division 3 of part 6.5 to company officers. Clauses 312 to 316 include people who are officers under the Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001 or any other person who takes part in the management of a company. The Building Act currently provides that any person who takes part in the management of a company is criminally liable if they were knowingly concerned in any offence by the company under the Building Act. The major difference between the current and new regimes is the introduction of clauses 313 and 314, which provide that liability can

be based on a failure to exercise due diligence and an officer can bear the burden of proving that they did exercise due diligence respectively, but these forms of liability apply only for a limited range of serious offences in building legislation. In a criminal proceeding, if a company officer is found guilty they will face fines and other potential sentencing orders. The clauses in division 3 of part 6.5 apply in relation to any body corporate that commits one of the relevant offences in building legislation irrespective of whether the body corporate that commits the offence is a developer or not.

It is also really important to look to joint and several liabilities of directors of bodies corporate. At a high level, the Building and Plumbing Commission will be able to issue a declared director notice if satisfied that at a relevant point in time a person was a director of a body corporate contravening a relevant provision or order issued to the body corporate under the act and that relevant directives or orders issued under the Building Act are rectification orders, rectification costs orders, directions to fix, emergency orders or building audits. This new power is needed to incentivise company compliance with consumer and public protection orders in the first place, and it is appropriate for directors to be personally liable if the company fails to comply, because compliance with regulatory orders is fairly and squarely within the knowledge and control of directors and they decide whether the company complies or not.

That new statutory insurance scheme provides a backstop if a company does not comply with the rectification orders, but not all consumers are covered by insurance. That includes people in high-rise apartment buildings, and in some very bad examples of defective or insufficient work we do want to make sure that we are in a position to have somebody pick up the tab and get that work fixed. We do want to make sure also that the new power applies only to directors and not to other company officers.

David DAVIS: I just want to turn now to clause 197. Clause 197 of the bill allows for internal review of decisions made by the BPC. It allows for an internal review to stay a decision unless it involves an emergency, interim or immediate suspension of a registration or licence. This seems to effectively ensure that if the BPC wants to suspend a builder registration or licence there will be no stay of that decision pending the completion of the internal review. This is a harsh position, though the BPC has only 28 days to complete the internal review. What happens, is the question, if the internal review or an external review overturns the decision? Will the registration or licence holder be compensated, or can the builder avoid the need to seek an internal review and appeal straight to VCAT?

Harriet SHING: Thank you, Mr Davis, for that question. There were two questions as part of it. In the first instance, you can elect to bypass the internal review and go directly to VCAT. And on the question of compensation and that 28-day period for internal review, compensation would not be part of seeking an internal review where a decision comes back in either direction. That is not dissimilar to other parts of regulatory frameworks where an internal review process and determination is made in accordance with that process.

David DAVIS: I now want to turn to clause 364. The proposed section 364 allows a person who suffers loss, injury or damage because of a contravention of a provision of building legislation, which includes the Building Act, Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995 and even security of payment legislation, to sue in a court of competent jurisdiction. This new provision was not in the Building Act. It looks like the provision could be used by a person involved in a building project to sue for damages in a court without the need to go through the BPC's mandatory conciliation process and then VCAT. With the delays in VCAT being well reported, this seems to be a way for those who can afford a lawyer to take a shortcut. Is that the intent of that provision?

Harriet SHING: It is not the intention of the provision to provide any kind of shortcut, Mr Davis.

David DAVIS: Whether it is intentional or not, does it have the effect of allowing a shortcut?

Harriet SHING: Do you mean instead of the internal review process? I think the easiest way, Mr Davis, for me to explain it is just to be really clear that there is not actually a shortcut as such. There

are pathways that people can elect to pursue, whether through internal review or through heading directly to VCAT. When one makes a choice, there are consequences that flow from each of those pathways, and it is intended as part of this reform to provide a better measure of autonomy for people to make the decisions about seeking the remedy that they may feel is fit for them.

David DAVIS: Well, just a little further then, as the building legislation contains a number of requirements, it may not be too difficult for a consumer to identify a contravention so they can sue a builder or another person involved in their home building project. Is it expected that consumers will easily be able to rely on this provision to avoid the mandatory BPC conciliation process and VCAT?

Harriet SHING: This is not a framework that has been established to allow or encourage consumers to take shortcuts or to bypass, in perhaps something other than good faith, a process by which a claim may be made. Very squarely the focus of this legislation and indeed the focus of our entire reform is to create a better measure of balance between consumers on the one hand and builders and industry on the other hand, and the regulation and enforcement provisions are intended to provide a better ease of access for consumers to remedies and a better capacity to make choices about how those remedies are sought. The mediation dispute resolution process is not dissimilar to work that has occurred previously under previous systems, and this is about making sure that that alternative dispute resolution framework continues to be available as part of what we hope will be an opportunity to fix situations in a remedial way so that the relationship between parties is able to be maintained.

David DAVIS: I am not sure that fully allays my concerns, but nonetheless let us move on. It is worth noting that a consumer might also breach building legislation. For example, a consumer may elect to not bother getting a building permit and therefore breach section 16 of the Building Act. Another example is a consumer occupying a house without an occupancy permit under section 39 of the Building Act. Will it be possible for a person such as a builder or perhaps an unregistered tradesperson to sue a consumer for losses they suffered because the consumer failed to obtain a building permit or occupied a home without an occupancy permit?

Harriet SHING: I am not sure how losses can flow to a builder because a consumer occupies a building prior to an occupancy permit being issued, Mr Davis. Perhaps you can provide a bit more clarity around how you think that losses might crystallise for a builder.

David DAVIS: I think if I was to speculate on that, it might be that there is an injury that occurs to somebody or there is some outcome that is unsatisfactory – somebody occupying the house, for example, in some way is captured by the fact that an incident occurs or something negative occurs. Is the consumer absolved of responsibility in this sense, or is it possible that one of those other groups, the builder or an unregistered tradesperson, might be able to sue?

Harriet SHING: Mr Davis, until such time as an occupancy permit has been issued a premises is not deemed to be fit for occupation, so I am not sure how it is that you would –

David DAVIS: Consumers do do that, though, sometimes.

Harriet SHING: Yes – seek to ascribe a measure of compensation payable to a builder for injury, which I think was the example that you cited there. The occupancy permit framework exists for a very specific purpose – that is, to permit a building literally to be occupied because certain threshold conditions have been met. This framework, including first-resort rectification orders and post-occupancy processes, exists to provide consumers with that measure of protection. This is not a bill that contemplates what might occur, for example, in a civil matter – a tort, for example – where a builder might seek compensation for damage to property or breach of any kind of contract and provisions under the contract which ordinarily, or at least in many instances, would require that the building not be occupied until such time as an occupancy permit had been issued.

David DAVIS: I understand the minister's point, but I think she is perhaps not listening to my concern here. It is a possibility that a consumer might jump the occupancy permit – that happens – and

in that circumstance there may be some negative outcome for the builder or a tradesperson. Are they held responsible for that?

Harriet SHING: The builder would have to establish the loss or injury or damage that occurred as a consequence of the contravention. That is again where we are talking about a tort. We are also potentially talking about a breach of contract. There are any number of different possibilities in the hypothetical that you have advanced that might crystallise in civil law – tort law ameliorated by contract – or in other frameworks whereby a builder has received an undertaking from a consumer not to enter a premises or to occupy it until such time as certain things are satisfied, including the issuing of an occupancy permit. This is, I would say, Mr Davis, something that to my mind crystallises outside of the scope of this bill and is probably most appropriately addressed through tort, through contract or through the framing of an agreement between builder and consumer.

David DAVIS: Minister, I will just accept your points there. Other than that earlier point, on which we are awaiting some further response –

Harriet SHING: Oh yes, sorry, I do –

David DAVIS: You do have that.

Harriet SHING: For the building surveyor issue, the owner and builder who is a building surveyor, which I think was the example that you referred to there, should actually appoint a separate surveyor so that they can act independently in accordance with the building surveyor code of conduct. The code of conduct sits outside of the bill itself, but as a general provision it has got eight core principles that building surveyors must adhere to when providing building surveyor services. They are:

1. Act in accordance with the law and in the public interest.
2. Act with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.

So they are two relevant components here.

3. Perform competently and within the required level of expertise and experience.
4. Act independently.

Which again is another relevant consideration.

5. Avoid conflicts of interest.

Again, another relevant consideration.

6. Document and maintain records.
7. Communicate promptly and effectively.
8. Provide a complaint handling process and address issues of non-compliance.

So there are a number of components there in those principles of conduct that would apply, to my mind, in any reasonable scenario, such as that which you have outlined, and would probably result in advice being given to any surveyor as an owner-builder that they appoint a separate surveyor, in compliance with those code-of-conduct principles.

David DAVIS: I have one further little group of questions. I listened closely to your earlier response, and I am not sure you quite captured the level of concern that the opposition has and also many tradespeople, the Master Builders, the Housing Industry Association (HIA) and others have about the increase in costs. The Master Builders say that construction costs under these legislative changes will increase by 10 to 30 per cent, and they say roughly 10 per cent of the increase to the contract price is to allow for future rectification orders. That is a very clear but real cost on new properties and new construction. You might think for a $400,000 house another 10 per cent is actually quite significant. Then they say the remaining 11 to 30 per cent allows for changes in the National Construction Code (NCC) 2025, which is being introduced in May this year; allows for increases in insurance premiums as a result of changes to first-resort insurance; and makes some allowance for the

increase in costs to reporting, for example, to comply with the new minimum financial requirements (MFRs). So 10 per cent plus another 20 per cent is 30 per cent; that is a very significant increase in costs. For young families and others this will potentially be a devastating blow. I understand the need to have better arrangements. I talked about that in my contribution, and I understand the objectives, but the aim is to achieve that without ratcheting up costs. The trouble with the bill is it does appear to do that and it does appear to have that consequence. I just wonder if you would respond to the points made by the industry associations. Can you provide any assurance that would allay my fears now as to those cost increases?

Harriet SHING: Mr Davis, on the question of costs, building defects cost Victorians presently $675 million – the defects – so we are actually protecting –

David DAVIS: At least.

Harriet SHING: Well, thank you, yes – at least. Defects themselves cost $675 million, so we are actually protecting consumers from the potentially debilitating costs that sit within that figure that can be incurred when consumers are forced to self-rectify that dodgy building work. Mr Davis, this is not a zero-sum game here. We do need to make sure that we are striking the right balance. You are, I think, probably also referring to matters that sit outside of this bill, that are out of scope as they relate to costs to build homes here in Victoria. Are you are talking about the building levy, Mr Davis? Yes, okay.

The new non-regional building levy component will be 0.37 cents for every dollar of the cost of building work that is $1.5 million or more, only imposed on class 2 to 8 buildings that are not in regional Victoria. In addition to that, the total amount of building permit levy to be imposed for class 2 to 8 buildings in non-regional Victoria will actually reduce by 50 per cent if the cost of building work is between $800,000 and up to $1 million, 66 per cent if the cost of building work is between $1 million and $1.5 million and 47 per cent if the cost of building work is $1.5 million or more. There are no changes to the rate or the amount of building permit levy in regional Victoria. The building permit levy is not increasing for any building class.

There is a penalty levy, and that is imposed if the building work that required a permit was carried out without a permit as well. So again, this is about making sure that we are providing a disincentive for people to contravene the building legislation, and they have been set by reference to other tax contraventions. Mr Davis, this is about, again, the striking of a balance between those self-funded rectification works that have previously not been covered by the supports or protections that consumers have needed; this framework, which provides that measure of support and consistent outcome; and again, those fairer changes through the levy framework that I have just discussed with you.

David DAVIS: But it is also the insurance premiums that will come with this change to first-resort insurance and some allowance, it has been put to me by the industry groups, for an increase in the cost of reporting to comply with the new minimum financial requirements. There are a number of layers, not just one or two, that are adding to the costs. Do you have a figure that is different from the 30 per cent that is proposed as the likely increase in cost by the industry associations?

Harriet SHING: Sorry, Mr Davis, you may have been conflating a couple of things here. Minimum financial requirements are buyer protections, and first-resort insurance premiums are buyer protections. We have been through that in significant, granular detail. That has been part of significant discussion over an extensive period of time now with industry. I do not want to be drawn, in the course of this particular committee stage, Mr Davis, on matters that are not within the scope of this bill. This is ground we have traversed before, I think, over a number of hours in fact. We have continued to engage with industry outside of this process to make sure that they are aware of this further work as it adds on to buyer protections, MFRs and first-resort insurance premiums.

David DAVIS: Minister, you seem to actually be confirming that there is going to be a significant increase in costs. I think that is what you are saying. That is what the sector is saying. They are saying

that there will be the 10 per cent increase to the contract price to allow for future rectification orders, and then they are saying the remaining 11 to 30 per cent allows for changes in the NCC 2025, which is being introduced in May this year, increases to insurance premiums as a result of the change to first-resort insurance and some allowance for increasing costs to reporting et cetera to comply with the new minimum financial requirements. So some of these are about the act. Some of them seem to me to add additional costs. If you have a different figure from that 10 plus 20, maybe you can justify a different figure. Give me a carefully thought through figure. If it is 22 per cent or what, I am interested to hear that. But at the moment I have these estimates by the industry groups, and they do concern me.

Harriet SHING: I am going to take you back to the first statement in your last contribution, Mr Davis. I am not saying what you have ascribed to me. Let us be really clear about that. I am not saying I agree with your figures. I am very happy to talk with you about costs when there is legislation in the committee stage that actually dictates costs. You are talking about things, Mr Davis, that are out of scope. We have actually just introduced legislation to make minimum financial requirements more workable for industry today in the Legislative Assembly. In the other place today, Mr Davis, legislation was introduced that goes directly to the matters –

David DAVIS: I am happy to say I was not there, as I think you ought to realise.

Harriet SHING: Well, Mr Davis, I am not sure what you do with your time when you are not in the chamber, but we are very happy to have a conversation with you as we go through that legislation that is now in the Legislative Assembly. I would not agree with you at all, and I would not want anyone to be drawn on concluding that I agree with you, about any significant increase of costs to industry as a result of this bill. If we should be looking for the cause of any cost increases, Mr Davis – and I hate to invoke his name in the course of this debate – we should actually be looking to supply chain instability, which industry has identified in the course of discussions about the National Construction Code is actually caused by Donald Trump's war in Iran. I can hear the Deputy President scoffing, which is unfortunate, but what I would say is that this is an issue which industry has raised in that context around the NCC. If you do want to talk about increases to costs, we can look at that, as far as a broader discussion on pressures across the industry, whether that is with feedstock for anything from pipes through to bitumen, right through to the challenge of supply chain and delivery of fuel. But Mr Davis, legislation has been introduced to make those MFRs more workable, and that will no doubt be something that we get to talk about in the not-too-distant future.

David DAVIS: I am not going to labour the point here, but I am going to make it very clear that I am not satisfied with the minister's response. In fact all of the indications from the industry are that there will be significant increases in costs. The minister has done nothing to allay my concerns on this. You might want to point to Donald Trump and the Middle East –

Harriet SHING: That is what industry has pointed to, Mr Davis.

David DAVIS: A lot of matters around this bill predate those points.

Harriet SHING: Have a look at their letter on the NCC. That refers to Donald Trump's war.

David DAVIS: The NCC changes, I understand, related to 2025 originally.

Harriet SHING: Why are they referring to the war in Iran, then? That is your stakeholder saying that.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Mr Davis, without assistance.

David DAVIS: I am just indicating to you, Deputy President, that I do not think it is convincing with this sort of bill to point to the Middle East as the main problem. This bill in and of itself and the associated matters have the capacity, it seems to industry – and that is the material provided to me – to increase the cost of housing. That is what the industry has told me. It may be that there are world events that also impact costs. That does not diminish the problems that this bill might have. It does not

diminish the costs that might come from the current arrangements that predate the Middle East and relate to this bill. They are not mutually exclusive. Minister, I think even you would have to concede that.

Harriet SHING: Mr Davis, I would encourage you to speak with the head of the HIA in relation to requests as they relate to the National Construction Code and the attribution of concern – further concern – about the National Construction Code as it relates to geopolitical events and challenges caused by upward pressure on prices as a result of the war that we have never asked to have impact upon us here in Australia. Mr Davis, it is, however, pleasing to note, as you did in your contribution, that you will be supporting this bill –

David Davis interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Mr Davis.

Harriet SHING: Mr Davis, I am just going to read that onto the record that you have now said that you will not be supporting this legislation.

David Davis interjected.

Harriet SHING: Okay. That is a very different position to that which you outlined in the second-reading debate, Mr Davis. If indeed it is that you are saying that consumers should not have protection, should not have a measure of recourse and should not have the benefit of the Building and Plumbing Commission – which, again, we heard from people interjecting, including the Deputy President, about how the Building and Plumbing Commission is in fact, cleaning up the industry – and if you are saying now, Mr Davis, that the Building and Plumbing Commission is not needed to clean up the industry, then that is something that you should absolutely put on the record. I think Victorians will be very interested to hear it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I would just like to clarify that my comments were not about the Building and Plumbing Commission cleaning up the industry but rather about Anna Cronin cleaning up the Victorian Building Authority.

David DAVIS: I think the minister is trying to run around in circles here. The fact is, as I outlined in my second-reading contribution, that I think the current authority has made some very useful steps, and I am very happy to concede that. But that is a different question than what is in this bill, and there is much in this bill for which the impact is not yet clear and not known. That is why we moved a reasoned amendment to seek greater consultation with the sector. That is what we did, and we did that for the reason that the government has pushed this through the lower house very quickly. It is a very large bill, as everyone has conceded. It is a doorstopper, and there are real questions about how the bill will impact.

The final point I would make is that the minister has not provided clarity on these cost matters. The industry has made it clear to me that the bill and associated matters are likely to see a significant increase in costs, and those, I think, are a legitimate set of points. Now, the minister has then said, 'Oh, well, the Middle East and Donald Trump'. There may well be further supply chain impacts, but the industry has made it clear that the bill itself and the related matters are actually an issue. That is what they have said, and that is why we have moved to see further consultation, which the chamber has not seen fit to provide as a step. That is why I have sought further clarification in the committee stage here, and it is why the opposition will vote against the bill in the final analysis.

Harriet SHING: Thanks, Mr Davis, for confirming that you do not support the establishment of the Building and Plumbing Commission and for confirming that you do not support reforms that put consumers at the heart of a framework regulating the biggest purchase of their lives. Mr Davis, this bill is not about introducing new compliance requirements and cost to industry; it is actually about strengthening the powers for the regulator to ensure that people do the right thing, a regulator that you have just indicated has done some good work. The cost of doing nothing is well known. Mr Davis,

you just corrected me when I referred to defects costing $675 million a year for consumers, and you said, 'At least.' Well, Mr Davis, the fact that you agree that it is an enormous amount of money shows that you are aware of the problems and the fact that defects put consumers at a distinct disadvantage and that these defects also cost industry in terms of rework and repeated costs and lost productivity. The bill shifts the system so that problems are prevented early rather than fixed at a much higher cost later. That means fewer defects and that means lower rectification costs and legal costs, and it also ensures that those who do the wrong thing bear the cost of noncompliance instead of consumers, instead of government and instead of, as I said in my contribution in this bill and in the buyer protection committee stage, the vast, vast majority of builders who do the right thing and take great pride in what they do.

It is something that, again, has been raised directly in the course of legislation that has been introduced in the Legislative Assembly today, as well as in matters which are well outside the scope of this bill. But, Mr Davis, if you are now saying that you do not support this legislation, which I have taken from what you have just said to indicate that you will vote against, then that would seem to create an entire paradox to what you said in the course of your second-reading contribution as the lead representative for the opposition. One might be forgiven for having serious concerns about the policy and positional vacuum that appears to operate within the coalition at the moment, whereby on the one hand you are talking about housing affordability and availability, on the one hand you are talking about providing people with a measure of protection and support where large builders die, disappear or go bankrupt and on the one hand you are talking about reforming – and you refer to a doorstopper – with large volumes of transitional provisions that do exactly that –

David DAVIS: Well, do they? That is the question. You have not been able to provide us assurances.

Harriet SHING: and on the other you are voting against this bill, Mr Davis. So I am perhaps almost as confused as no doubt your colleagues will be.

David DAVIS: I am going to conclude here and make a very serious point here that the opposition understands the intent of the bill, and the opposition understands what all Victorian consumers want. They not only want certain clear protections, but they also want a bill that is not going to land them with massive new costs that make their homes more expensive, in this case by as much as 30 per cent. Now, if that is the outcome, where homes become more expensive, people will be very concerned. You assert that the bill will do X and Y and Z. The point here is you have not fully and adequately consulted with many in the sector. That is what they have told us, and that is what they have told us in writing. That is why we moved the reasoned amendment, to say the consultation had been inadequate. It is all very well for you to assert that the bill will make certain changes and certain outcomes, but few people trust this government or believe that its approach is always going to deliver the right outcome. In fact there is every bit of evidence that the government's approach on this bill may deliver deficiently and not deliver the outcome that is required. I predict confidently here that over time the government will come back and have to clean up errors in this bill as the bill starts to bed down. There will be errors there because the government has not consulted properly and widely. I think the consumers, householders and persons wanting to get into a home have every right to seek two things: high-quality building but building at a good cost as well. The concern here is that the second part of that might not be met, and indeed because of the rushed way the government has pushed this through, the first part may not be met either.

Harriet SHING: Housing, whilst very expensive around Australia, is less expensive in Victoria, to buy or to rent. That is a combination of a couple of things: supply and a pipeline of certainty that enables builders and developers to get timely decisions around the way in which they develop, seek approval for, construct and complete dwellings. Mr Davis, to assert that because there may be unforeseen or unintended consequences in a bill that you, not an hour ago, stood to say that you would support –

David Davis interjected.

Harriet SHING: Not oppose, I beg your pardon. Not oppose means that you would ultimately vote yes, Mr Davis. And now you are saying that you will vote no. That effectively puts paid to the credibility of everything that you said when you got to your feet in the second-reading debate. Mr Davis, what we are doing, which is hard work and long-term work and work that requires partnerships with industry, with communities across all levels of government and with our supply chain, is making housing more available and more affordable. That is not happening because of any of the settings being advanced by the opposition, Mr Davis. That is happening despite them. That measure of certainty and clarity for buyers and those buyer protections are not happening because of any of the assertions that you have stood here in this chamber, along with your colleagues, to make. It is happening despite them.

The work that we are doing to provide safety, certainty and security for people – the very people who you purport to represent, who are distraught because they lose their life savings, they cannot buy in the suburbs that they grew up in because planning permission is intended to be revoked or who cannot get into an area which has been ring-fenced and are therefore left with fewer options, Mr Davis – are the Victorians at the heart of our pivot to a consumer focus on a building system guided by reform that has been undertaken for an extensive period of time. Mr Davis, we commenced this work in 2024. Consultation is not unsuccessful simply because it does not give everything to everyone who wants it. Mr Davis, you can agree to disagree with this, but to put a reasoned amendment that says 'Until such time as proper consultation would occur' would seem to connote that proper consultation is only achieved when every single thing on a wish list is achieved. That is not consultation, Mr Davis; that is a veto.

The work that we are doing here is very squarely guided by the fact that we made a decision as a government to support consumers with navigating their way through a building system that for too long had not had regard for them in the way that it needed to. That is the large-scale work that Anna Cronin and others are leading. That is the large-scale work that has informed development of this legislation. That is why these bills have such a comprehensive set of transitional provisions, because we are moving away from a system which was not fit for purpose when it came to people making that biggest purchase. We will keep going with the work we are going with, and we will do so because we know that it is in the interests of those people who do not come to this place, who saved for years and often decades and sometimes generations in order to find a home that they can afford.

David DAVIS: In response to that, we are concerned about the outcomes for people seeking homes. We are very concerned about the quality, and this bill may not provide that. Because of the government's rushed approach, they cannot guarantee that that is the case. Equally, we are very concerned about the high costs that are going to be ratcheted up, and it may be between 10 and 30 per cent more, and this bill may add to the cost of every new home and every new renovation in the state. If that is the case – the industry believes it is – that will cause tremendous damage to consumers. They want safety and security, for sure, and we agree with that, and they want good outcomes in terms of quality, but they also do not want the massive slug of additional costs because the government has not worked through the regulatory steps properly.

Harriet SHING: Mr Davis, just to be really clear, all of the provisions that you have cited and all of the reasons that you have referred to today are not actually within the scope of this bill.

Clause agreed to; clauses 2 to 1019 agreed to.

Reported to house without amendment.

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (17:20): I move:

> That the report be now adopted.

Motion agreed to.

Report adopted.

Third reading

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (17:20): I move:

That the bill be now read a third time and do pass.

Council divided on motion:

Ayes (24): Ryan Batchelor, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Jeff Bourman, Katherine Copsey, Enver Erdogan, Jacinta Ermacora, David Ettershank, Michael Galea, Anasina Gray-Barberio, Shaun Leane, Sarah Mansfield, Tom McIntosh, Rachel Payne, Aiv Puglielli, Georgie Purcell, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Jaclyn Symes, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell, Sheena Watt

Noes (14): Melina Bath, Gaelle Broad, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Bev McArthur, Joe McCracken, Nick McGowan, Evan Mulholland, Richard Welch

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The PRESIDENT: Pursuant to standing order 14.28, the bill will be returned to the Assembly with a message informing them that the Council has agreed to the bill without amendment.

Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026

Second reading

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Health, Minister for Water) (17:27): I move, by leave:

That the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The PRESIDENT: Pursuant to standing order 14.28, the bill will be returned to the Assembly with a message informing them that the Council has agreed to the bill without amendment.

Adjournment

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (17:27): I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Agriculture sector

Jacinta ERMACORA (Western Victoria) (17:27): (2492) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Energy and Resources Lily D'Ambrosio. Victorian farmers produce $22 billion in agricultural output annually. Labor has secured 10 million litres of diesel as a strategic fuel reserve to protect food security during times of uncertainty. The action I seek is an update on how the fuel reserve is supporting farmers through the winter growing season.

Box Hill brickworks site

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (17:28): (2493) My adjournment is for the new Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop. I have raised in this chamber three times the question of the rezoning of the Box Hill brickworks. Box Hill brickworks, if anyone needs any reminder, is a contaminated landfill site that has been unoccupied for some 40 years and that the Whitehorse council has never considered giving planning approval to build on because it is considered dangerous. However, late last year, out of the blue, it was rezoned for high-rise residential housing, and yet no clarity on the environmental impacts or other environmental studies was offered to explain how this rezoning could take place. The latest environmental study we have is a 2018 EPA report that says quite clearly, 'Do not build on this site. It has contaminants, including carcinogens, and it risks leaching dangerous groundwater into neighbouring streets.' Having asked that in two adjournments and a letter to the minister and not having had a reply on this matter, I now ask the new minister: what environmental studies do you or your department have that clearly show that it is now safe to build on a site that has never been considered safe to build on? Where are the new environmental study reports? What potential breaches of process or due care have you done by going straight from 'unoccupiable' to 'heavily occupied'? What consultation was done in conjunction with that?

It is completely unsatisfactory to the Box Hill community that this is being done under their nose when, as is traditional across Melbourne, landfill sites, particularly contaminated ones, are typically repurposed as public parkland, and that is indeed what 10,000 people in Box Hill who have signed a petition have said: they want this land as open parkland. This is in the context of a suburb where there are already five 50-storey apartment buildings approved and where the population is going to double but there are no matching additions of social infrastructure, open space or recreational areas that will appropriately accommodate the higher level of population. It is not unreasonable, so again I ask the minister: provide the information on the basis of which you and your department, or your predecessors, changed the residential zoning of the Box Hill brickworks site.

Land and Water Resources Otway Catchment

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (17:31): (2494) My adjournment is for the Minister for Water, and the action I am seeking is for the minister to meet with the Land and Water Resources Otway Catchment Landcare group. From the early 1980s through to 2017, Barwon Water extracted large volumes of water from the Lower Tertiary Aquifer in the inland Otway Basin. This overextraction left many of the surrounding water tables well below their healthy operating depth, including in the Gellibrand River Valley, which remains at around 2 metres below pre-extraction levels. Low water tables contribute to dry soil and vegetation, which dramatically increases fire risk and severity. This is an area that the Environment and Planning Committee recently went and visited to see firsthand the impact that fires have had right across the Otways, and it is apparent just how dry that area still is. Last summer we saw the impacts of overextraction firsthand with those Gellibrand River–Carlisle River bushfires. They ripped through these parched landscapes, and it is going to take some of them a very, very long time to recover.

Aside from the fire risk, low water tables devastate groundwater-dependent ecosystems, including many native flora and fauna. These are ecosystems that are already struggling from the pressures of climate change. Simply put, water is the basis of life, and a landscape without sufficient water to feed it begins to die. The Land and Water Resources Otway Landcare group have repeatedly attempted to make contact with successive water ministers since 2014 – for 12 years – to discuss the holistic restoration of the Lower Tertiary Aquifer. The Land and Water Resources Otway Landcare group have an approach that they believe will help both ground and surface water flows recover to near pre-extraction levels and allow the landscape to recover from decades of exploitation. This will also have the benefit of decreasing fire risk in this area over the long term. All they ask is that you meet with them and hear them out. Minister, will you meet with the LAWROC Landcare group and work collaboratively with them to help protect and restore our magnificent Otways landscape?

Road maintenance

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (17:33): (2495) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Local roads are used every day by families, workers, students, tradies, public transport users and freight operators across Southern Metro. Whether people are driving to work, catching a bus, heading to school drop-off or travelling to local businesses, well-maintained roads matter. That is why the Labor government's road blitz is so important. It is about getting on with the practical work of repairing, resurfacing and maintaining roads across Victoria, making journeys safer and smoother for local communities. This work also supports many local workers who rely on our road network every day, including emergency services, bus drivers, delivery workers and small businesses. I commend the minister for the government's continued focus on road maintenance and road safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide my office with information on how the road maintenance blitz will benefit the community of Southern Metro.

Somerton Road, Greenvale, duplication

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (17:34): (2496) My adjournment is also to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and is regarding the long-overdue upgrade of Somerton Road in my electorate. I am sure the residents of Greenvale were poring through the budget papers, like I was, looking for a skerrick of any funding for any commitments only to find that they have been neglected, and that would be the case here, where there is no money to duplicate Somerton Road. As my residents keep asking me about, it is in desperate need of duplication – Somerton Road. It is a key east–west connection going all the way from Cooper Street to the Hume, all the way past Mickleham Road, connecting the communities of Greenvale, Roxburgh Park and Meadow Heights, yet you have this congestion point between Roxburgh Park Drive and Mickleham Road that is one lane each way. I know the minister for roads would be well aware of this key arterial and the bottleneck it causes at peak hour for parents dropping their kids off at school or picking them up or dropping them off at kinder or trying to get to medical appointments. This road is a daily nightmare for many, many constituents, thousands of constituents who have to use it every day only to be sitting in their cars stuck in traffic. We urgently need to consider duplicating Somerton Road. It is long overdue.

I spoke earlier today about planning studies on the Upfield line that never appeared. The government actually undertook a planning study in 2023. Do you think we have ever heard any results out of that planning study? Do you think it has ever been released? Do you think the government has ever acted on that particular planning study? No, it has not, because when Labor cannot manage money, it is Victorians that pay the price.

Victorians in Greenvale have had enough of the traffic – barely any budget commitments for constituents in Greenvale, who are stuck in traffic on Mickleham Road, who are stuck in traffic on Somerton Road and on the Hume, yet we see $15 billion fly out the door on to criminal construction sites through the CFMEU to the criminal underworld. We see $600 million wasted on the Commonwealth Games – $200,000 for pot plants – and all sorts of waste. When the government wastes and we have interest on our debt growing by about $1.65 million per hour, it is communities like the communities of Greenvale, Roxburgh Park, Meadow Heights, Westmeadows and Attwood that are the ones that pay the price for the mismanagement. The action I seek is for the minister to finally duplicate Somerton Road.

Mental health services

David ETTERSHANK (Western Metropolitan) (17:37): (2497) My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. Lawyers who act on behalf of people with mental illness at the Mental Health Tribunal are critical in safeguarding their clients' rights, ensuring they are involved and maintaining procedural fairness in decisions around compulsory treatment. However, under the current system, legal representatives face significant delays in accessing their clients' clinical reports and records. This means they have insufficient time to brief their clients prior to their appearance at the tribunal, undermining both the fairness and the efficiency of the tribunal process.

The introduction of the electronic health information system, EHIS, via the Mental Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 was intended to enable real-time, integrated access to mental health information, to strengthen oversight and to afford consumers greater control over their information. These goals would have been enhanced if legal representatives were more easily able to access their clients' EHIS records where informed consent was provided.

Currently, legal representatives need to request documents from individual treating teams, often under tight timeframes and with no guarantee of a response. This issue increases administrative burdens on clinicians. It can lead to situations where consumers and their lawyers are forced to proceed without having seen the documents that the decision-makers rely upon. In some cases, hearings are delayed or adjourned, leaving vulnerable clients in limbo.

It would be a very simple fix to authorise EHIS access for legal representatives. This would ensure the fair and timely exchange of information, enabling lawyers to better represent, advise and advocate for their clients and support their rights. Further, it would advance a consumer and human rights centred mental health system, as exemplified in the Mental Health Legal Rights Service model co-designed by Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Victorian Legal Aid and the mental health legal service. It would also align with the *Yoorrook for Transformation* recommendation to strengthen First Peoples–led legal support. It ticks a lot of boxes, Minister. The action I seek is for the minister to implement this simple reform to streamline the mental health system in order to provide better and fairer outcomes for consumers.

North-Eastern Metropolitan Region graffiti removal

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (17:40): (2498) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in the other place, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide an update to me on the estimate of the damage done to the Ringwood bridge over the Maroondah Highway at Ringwood and to keep me updated on developments. In recent months Mr McGowan took it upon himself to attempt to remove graffiti from the Ringwood bridge. Some offensive graffiti had already been removed by professionals, but Mr McGowan, a self-styled and self-professed expert, thought he could do one better. To no-one's surprise, not only did he further damage a public asset but he left an even worse eyesore. When the Leader of the Opposition mows a median strip for the cameras, we can roll our eyes at the theatre of it, and when Liberal MPs fill a pothole in Nepean for a social media stunt, we can see their motivation. But when a member of Parliament attempts to remove graffiti from a bridge with no expertise, no authorisation, no professional assessment and a lack of appropriate treatment, leaving the structure in a worse condition than they found it, that is not politics, that is recklessness.

The opposition continue to lack focus, evidenced through their stunts and unilateral actions, yet they have no focus other than to cut $40 billion from the budget. Proper graffiti removal on public assets and infrastructure takes expertise. It requires knowledge of the surface material, the correct chemical agents and trained personnel that understand that the wrong treatment causes permanent damage. The member opposite understood none of this. That is why the Allan Labor government is investing a record $1.04 billion in this budget in repairing and maintaining Victoria's roads and infrastructure, including the removal of 200,000 graffiti tags by trained crews who know what they are doing. That is the difference between this government and the opposition: one has a budgeted plan, the other has plans for cuts and stunts and ways to add to the taxpayer bill. The action I seek is that the minister ensure that the damage caused to this bridge, which is assessed to be in the order of $150,000, be rectified, and that a bill for the cost of repairing the asset is sent to Mr McGowan for his attention.

Miners Rest sports facility

Joe McCRACKEN (Western Victoria) (17:42): (2499) I note the Minister for Education ventured out of Melbourne last week, over the West Gate and past the tunnel that no-one uses, and graced us all with his presence to make an announcement at Miners Rest – and oh, what a great announcement it was! By way of background, at the 2022 state election Labor made a commitment to build a new

oval and sporting complex at Miners Rest as part of the Commonwealth Games. That is the same Commonwealth Games that went to Scotland courtesy of the Labor Party, resulting in almost $600 million wasted. Like so many Labor commitments, they are made with great fanfare but are rarely delivered upon. The people of Miners Rest have now come to know that reality, because it is a lived reality for them. The member for Ripon has a track record of ignoring her electorate. First she voted for the emergency services tax, which ruined volunteers, then she supported the VicGrid legislation, which pummelled farmers into the ground, and now she is turning her back on the people of Miners Rest, and the Deputy Premier is complicit in that. Even the Premier was in Miners Rest not that long ago, recommitting to this complex as well. But what does it all mean? Not very much.

Commitments from Labor are not worth the paper they are written on. The government talk big, trumpeting how much they support regional Victoria, but I would say to them: put your money where your mouth is. But the problem is they are all mouth and no money. The bank is empty, the state is broke, they have no money left. It has all been wasted on big corruption at Big Build sites and going to pay $1.2 million every hour in interest. So when the Deputy Premier rolls into Miners Rest and says 'Sorry, not sorry' no wonder people are angry. This is the cost of Labor's complete and utter mismanagement. When the Labor Deputy Premier and the Labor member for Ripon turn up to an announcement all smiles, the reality is that the people of Miners Rest are left with frowns, frustration and anger.

The action I seek from the Minister for Education and Deputy Premier is simple. On behalf of the people of Miners Rest, I demand that he apologise for breaking a key election commitment Labor made, which has now left Miners Rest in complete and utter limbo. They were promised an oval, they were promised a sporting complex, and they were delivered empty promises and false hope and absolutely nothing in return.

Fines system

Katherine COPSEY (Southern Metropolitan) (17:45): (2500) My adjournment this evening is for the Attorney-General. The action I seek is for the Attorney-General to urgently introduce legislation to end imprisonment and the threat of imprisonment for unpaid fines debt in Victoria. No-one should be jailed because they are poor, and no-one should face prison for failing to pay a fine for an offence that would never in itself result in a prison sentence. Yet in Victoria, people can still be threatened with imprisonment for unpaid fines arising from some low-level matters such as tolls, parking, littering and other infringements. The result of this situation is a two-tiered justice system. People who have the financial capacity to pay move on with their lives, but people experiencing poverty, homelessness, family violence, mental illness or other hardship are dragged deeper and deeper into a web of enforcement fees, warrants and ultimately the threat of prison. Imprisonment for unpaid fines is unjust because it punishes poverty, not wrongdoing. Imprisonment and threats of imprisonment cause severe and avoidable harm to individuals, families and communities, particularly First Nations peoples. The safeguards in the Fines Reform Act 2014 are failing in practice, with outcomes disproportionately affecting marginalised Victorians.

In 2023–24 imprisonment-in-lieu orders would have taken an average of 12.6 years to comply with. One order would have taken 165 years to repay, and another historic order would have taken 264 years. The lowest monthly repayment amount was just $5. If someone can only afford $5 a month, in reality they do not actually have capacity to pay and they should not be threatened with prison. Historic imprisonment warrants made under repealed laws also undermine the government's own justice intentions in repealing those laws. Options that merely reprocess or manage those warrants do not fix the fundamental injustice in these cases, and they risk causing further harm and would be impractical and burdensome for vulnerable people and for our justice system alike.

The harms that flow from unnecessary imprisonment are obvious: even a short time can cost someone their job, their home, their health, their family stability and their connection to community. For First Nations peoples that risk is even more serious, particularly given the shameful and ongoing crisis of

deaths in custody in this country. There is a sensible and practical path forward: to void outstanding imprisonment warrants made under repealed or superseded laws, to remove imprisonment from section 165 of the Fines Reform Act and to recover fines debt through existing alternatives to imprisonment. Attorney, poverty is not a crime, and Victoria's fines system should finally reflect that.

Community sport

Tom McINTOSH (Eastern Victoria) (17:48): (2501) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Community Sport, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on how the government is continuing to support Victorian sport clubs. Koonwarra reserve had big news from the state budget, and I joined Jodie and about 30 players, family and friends to celebrate the $100,000 for their master plan. Jodie has worked with my office – always positive, always pushing forward – to get this important first step on the new clubrooms. Jodie and the club's can-do attitude can be seen in the playground looking over the ground, and I am committed to working with the club to get the new clubrooms delivered for all the teams, all the players and the community.

Poowong-Loch's new scoreboard is looking sensational. It was a blast to join jumper presentation night and celebrate the new scoreboard. This small ground hosts a big team, and all the juniors – the under-10s, under-12s and under-14s – made plenty of noise and it was a hell of a lot of fun. It is going to set them up for success. Go Bulls.

Waste and recycling management

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (17:49): (2502) My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Planning, and the action I seek is for the minister to outline what planning expectations and safeguards the government will now apply to future waste and resource recovery proposals across Melbourne and Victoria following the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal's decision to uphold the Environment Protection Authority Victoria's health and environmental concerns regarding the Hampton Park waste transfer station. On 10 April 2026, I am very pleased to announce, the tribunal confirmed the EPA's refusal of a development licence for a major waste transfer facility proposed by Veolia Recycling & Recovering Pty Ltd, which was intended to process up to 550,000 tonnes of waste from nine different councils in a residential area of Melbourne's south-east. Critically, the refusal was based on potential health impacts on residents living just 170 to 250 metres from the site, an issue that has generated significant community concern and parliamentary scrutiny. Earlier this year more than 50 residents travelled to Parliament to support a petition, which I had the great honour of presenting here in Parliament, with over 4000 signatures opposing the proposal, and members from all sides of the chamber entered into the debate because of its scale, location and cumulative impacts that are already burdening this community.

International experience shows that failures in the management or oversight of contaminated or industrial waste can, under certain conditions, lead to serious long-term health consequences, including reproductive and developmental impacts. Relevant examples include the Corby toxic waste case in the United Kingdom, where negligent handling of contaminated materials was found to have contributed to limb deformities in newborn babies. The Love Canal case in the United States investigated increases in reproductive and developmental health issues linked to buried chemical waste, prompting major federal reforms. With Minamata disease in Japan, industrial mercury contamination caused severe congenital neurological disorders. With the Seveso disaster in Italy, dioxin release led to documented reproductive and long-term health impacts and the EU Seveso directive. With the Bhopal disaster in India, ongoing studies have examined possible long-term and intergenerational health impacts long after the catastrophic gas leak.

These cases are not directly comparable to an area like Hampton Park, which, I might add, is riddled with waterways and underground springs, but they reinforce a clear principle that waste-related activities must be planned, located and regulated with the highest degree of caution, especially near residential areas. While I was really honoured to stand with my local community, I want to ask the minister: after sustained community advocacy, please tell us what you are going to emphasise so

residents have clarity about what safeguards will now apply and how similar conflicts can be avoided in the future.

Murray Valley Highway

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL (Northern Victoria) (17:52): (2503) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the dangerous potholes on the Murray Valley Highway between Wodonga and Tallangatta to be immediately repaired. The Murray Valley Highway is a disgrace. From Euston in the north to past Corryong in the east, the number of potholes, ruts, bulges and rough patches is simply uncountable. For years my constituents in the north have raised their concerns about the condition of the Murray Valley Highway. For years these concerns have been largely ignored or fobbed off with quick fixes and platitudes from the government. The potholes I speak of between Wodonga and Tallangatta are incredibly dangerous. Some of these potholes are a metre wide by 50 centimetres deep, enough to swallow the wheel of a small car or motorbike and cause serious injury and damage to both driver and vehicle. This particular section of the Murray Valley Highway is travelled by both tourists and residents frequently, as it curves around the Hume Dam and travels along the rail trail. The area attracts hundreds of visitors every week, and they are confronted with the terrible conditions of the road. While I acknowledge the recent announcement of funding to fix regional roads, this is a promise we have all heard before. Every year the government announces millions of dollars to fix regional roads, and every year my constituents are let down with temporary fixes or roadworks that do not last the distance, crumbling within weeks of completion. It is not good enough. This government seems to know nothing about the value of money. So, Minister, the action I seek is for the dangerous potholes on the Murray Valley Highway between Wodonga and Tallangatta to be immediately repaired.

Protective services officers

Gaelle BROAD (Northern Victoria) (17:54): (2504) My adjournment is for the Minister for Police. The action I seek is for the minister's support to enable local protective services officers to be rostered at the Bendigo railway station from 3 pm each day. I have previously raised the need for more PSOs, and in response the minister advised that Bendigo has five PSOs, with two rostered at the station each day of the week from 4:30 pm until 12:30 am. Locally, I have spoken with police, the local council and residents, and I consistently hear from residents who are concerned about the rise in crime and antisocial behaviour in Bendigo, especially at the railway station and the Bendigo mall. Residents, including seniors, parents and young people, have told me that they feel unsafe, especially when large groups congregate in the area. One couple said a man threatened their lives and those of young students at the station. In another incident a man was charged following an alleged sexual assault of an 18-year-old girl on a bus shortly after leaving the Bendigo railway station. I also spoke with a man who was attacked from behind and forced to the ground, and he sustained injuries to his face, at the nearby Marketplace shopping centre. I am aware that Victoria Police have previously run targeted operations aimed at addressing antisocial behaviour and crime in Bendigo, but additional year-round support is needed. I would appreciate the minister's support to enable an increased presence of PSOs not from the last train but from 3 pm each day, when they are needed most. I will look forward to the minister's response.

Government services accessibility

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (17:56): (2505) The adjournment matter I wish to raise this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Government Services. We live in a complex world, and this provides us with amazing opportunities, conveniences and entertainment, but it also means that there are often more services we need to engage with, and many of them are government services. For people with disabilities, particularly those who are blind or vision impaired, this complex world also provides opportunities and challenges. New forms of technology can make the world more accessible, and done the right way, this also includes the digital environment. But we are not talking about being able to navigate Netflix; government services are being shifted more and more online to

portals, and while this might be more efficient and more convenient for many, when disability access is not embedded in design from the beginning, blind people can be locked out.

This issue is not theoretical, it is lived every day by people with severe vision impairment, including those in my own community. Increasingly, accessing health care, banking, government services and even basic retail transactions requires navigating websites, apps, automated checkouts and security systems that simply do not work with screen readers or non-visual navigation. Digital exclusion of this kind is not merely an inconvenience, it is a form of discrimination. While Commonwealth laws such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 exist, the Victorian government also has direct responsibility for how its own services are designed, delivered, procured and monitored. Government administration must reflect the reality that digital access is now fundamental to civic participation. Disability inclusion cannot stop at physical access ramps and signage. In a digital-first environment, accessibility must be embedded into platforms, documents, forms and service delivery from the outset and not treated as an afterthought or delegated to individuals to work around. The action I am seeking is practical and achievable: to direct departments and funded services to audit accessibility, aligned with recognised accessibility standards, and to ensure non-digital alternatives remain genuinely available.

Western Health

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (17:58): (2506) My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Health. The government, via Safer Care Victoria and the Department of Health, is planning to cut and centralise the oesophageal cancer surgery from Western Health, relocating it to Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and Barwon Health. I have spoken to a number of surgeons who oppose this move, and they have raised concerns about the rationale behind the decision and the impact it will have on patients, the community and the surgical teams at Western Health.

The recently opened Footscray Hospital is a $1.5 billion facility with 20 operating theatres. The facility offers robotic surgery, 24/7 surgical cover, onsite ICU, oncology and ED access and is accredited for surgical training, amongst other things. Surgery such as oesophagectomy is low volume and high complexity, and it needs appropriate surgical backup, ICU, radiology, oncology – all of these services which Western Health currently provides. Western Health is the only metropolitan provider of oesophageal surgery in the western suburbs, serving a catchment of approximately 1.7 million people. This is Melbourne's fastest growing corridor and includes some of Victoria's most disadvantaged communities. There are four surgeons at Western Health with excellent clinical results in this complex, highly specialised surgery. At Barwon Health in Geelong there is only one surgeon and therefore no backup, which potentially puts patients at risk. Removing the service would leave patients who need access to emergency departments without local access, forcing vulnerable patients and their families to travel further and disrupt follow-up care. As one of the doctors said to me, 'Labor has abandoned the west.' This decision will have implications for patient access and clinical training pathways, and the very surgeons doing this critical work have not been consulted. So the action I seek from the ministry is for the minister to explain why the government is cutting these critical services and why communities in the western suburbs are being denied local access to vital health care.

Vets for Compassion

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (18:00): (2507) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for her to meet with Vets for Compassion to discuss a practical solution to urgent non-veterinary darter supervision requirements. Imagine that you stopped on a highway to attend to a kangaroo hit by a vehicle in the middle of the road. With the help of a kind stranger, you carefully place the docile kangaroo into the front passenger seat of your small car. Five minutes into the journey, the injured kangaroo becomes alert, kicking and thrashing as you drive through busy morning traffic. You immediately pull into the emergency lane and exit the vehicle, and in a highly distressed state, you call for help. Within 25 minutes a Vets for Compassion volunteer arrives with the equipment and with the skills needed to safely dart and sedate the animal. Except

under current restrictions, darting and sedating that kangaroo to prevent their further suffering is now illegal in Victoria, despite this practice being used for years and years to respond to wildlife emergencies safely and humanely. Now imagine that this story actually happened to someone in our state – because it did.

In November last year the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria clarified legislation that non-veterinary darters must now be accompanied by a veterinarian physically onsite with them. On paper this reads like a minor clarification, but in practice it has had immediate and profound consequences for animals and responders who have been doing this work for years, some even decades, right across the state. Despite a trained volunteer darter being available and ready to sedate the injured and distressed kangaroo, a supervising vet was unable to attend for a further 2.5 hours as they were already on another call-out supervising another non-vet darter.

For several years telehealth was considered an appropriate form of direct supervision for darting operations. Under this model, non-vet darters responded to more than 92 per cent of call-outs from the state, as vets do not have the capacity to undertake this work themselves. But since the clarification that vet supervision requires physical presence, the essential emergency response care that wildlife responders can provide has been significantly restricted. Victoria Police, the CFA, Metro Trains, Parks Victoria, various councils and members of the public all rely on these services when animals are injured or displaced in high-risk environments. Under the current restrictions these agencies are often left with no alternative options, resulting in prolonged and unnecessary animal suffering, increased public safety risks, significant pressure on already stretched responders and community outrage at the lack of available support. This situation has become increasingly dire, and I call on the minister to work with Vets for Compassion to find a practical solution.

CO2CRC

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (18:03): (2508) My matter is for the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources, and it concerns the CO2CRC, Australia's leading, independent, not-for-profit research organisation in carbon capture and storage. It is based here in Melbourne. It has a very important premises down in the west of the state, the Otway International Test Centre. The test centre is the only field-scale geological CO_2 storage facility of its kind anywhere in the world. It is a kilometre-deep underground laboratory where researchers can inject controlled volumes of CO_2 and observe in real time how this is able to be managed. The data field sets for geological CO_2 are very important. The CRC is funded by the federal government, but there has traditionally been some measure of state support and encouragement. If this is not funded in tonight's budget, the CRC will slowly wind down. We are at a point where we have got environmental targets at a state and federal level, and carbon capture use and storage are an important and very valuable step in providing part of the solution to meeting those various targets.

All around the world carbon capture and storage is a normal part of the system. I notice Keir Starmer, whatever his current difficulties, has allocated £22 billion to carbon capture and storage in Britain. He sees it as very important. And it is a great opportunity for Victoria. We have old gas storage reservoirs that are now empty and actually could carry significant amounts of CO_2 and could enable some of our hard-to-abate industries to put the CO_2 down those old storage areas. So there are a raft of different opportunities, and the CRC is a very important part of that. We obviously have CarbonNet funded by the federal government and the state government traditionally, but my understanding is that the state government money has run out. What I am asking the minister for energy to do is to get a grip on this, to actually advocate to the federal minister and say, 'Make sure you re-fund the CRC.' It does valuable research work. It is an important part of the infrastructure. The state energy minister is well able to advocate to the federal minister, and perhaps the federal Treasurer too, to say, 'You put that money in to make sure the CRC on CO_2 storage and capture is actually protected.' It is a bad thing for Victoria if this is lost. It is a bad thing for the Victorian community, for Australia. It is a bad thing for the world more generally if you hold the views that many of the people in the current state and federal governments do. The minister needs to advocate, and she needs to do it urgently.

Romsey Road and High Street, Woodend

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (18:06): (2509) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action that I seek is that the minister allocate funding for a full safety audit of both Romsey Road and High Street where children cross the road to access Woodend Primary School. Recently two children in two separate incidents were hit by cars while crossing Romsey Road to get to school. This is a parent's worst nightmare. Thankfully neither incident was fatal, but the children were injured and this was a traumatic series of events for the school community. Kate Kendall, the mayor of Macedon Ranges Shire Council, has met with the school principal and as a result has formally written on behalf of council to the Department of Transport and Planning. The letter calls for urgent treatments to the road and intersection to improve pedestrian safety, and I fully back this call for fast and decisive action to be taken.

Woodend Primary School is located in the heart of Woodend along High Street, which is the main thoroughfare through town and carries a large volume of traffic each day. Romsey Road intersects with High Street and is a key connecting road between the residential housing area to the north of the of the road and Woodend Primary School to the south. Four years ago in Parliament I raised the matter of safety concerns for pedestrians around Woodend Primary School, and at that time the Minister for Education took no action to make safety improvements. School crossing supervisors have reported near misses over the years, yet nothing has been done. I am furious that it has taken two incidents in which children were hurt before the local Labor member has finally taken an interest. The safety of children walking to the school has been an absolute top priority, yet the state Labor government has a terrible record when it comes to responding to safety issues at school crossings.

After a serious crash in 2018 at the pedestrian crossing outside Kialla West Primary School I started advocating for a major safety upgrade of that crossing. Labor dragged their feet for eight years before finally contributing some funds towards an upgrade this year and only because there was another vehicle collision there earlier this year. But it should not take repeat incidents before the government acts. I understand that the Department of Transport and Planning has implemented better signage on Romsey Road and I welcome interim measures to heighten safety, but that is clearly not enough. Two children were hurt in two separate incidents within the space of a week. This shows that there is a clear safety issue for the students crossing at Romsey Road. I urge the minister to publicly commit to doing a safety audit and making serious investment into long-term solutions for pedestrian safety around Woodend Primary School.

Health workforce

Trung LUU (Western Metropolitan) (18:09): (2510) My matter is for the Minister for Health and is regarding the Allan Labor government's failure to plan for successful employment outcomes for graduates following its free TAFE and nursing degree initiative. The action I seek is for the minister to explain how the government allowed up to 1500 newly qualified Victorian nurses to graduate without a clear pathway to employment and what the government is doing to assist these graduates to find their dream job in the health sector.

In 2022 the former Andrews Labor government announced an initiative to cover university fees for nursing and midwifery students, encouraging more than 10,000 Victorians, many of them young people and mature-aged career changers, to enter the profession. These students were told they were answering the workforce crisis and stepping into a secure, meaningful job in Victoria's health system. Instead, almost five months after graduating, up to 1500 newly qualified nurses remain unable to secure a graduate position. Many are now working casually in hospitality, retail and petrol stations while looking interstate for employment. Universities estimate that nearly a third of recent nursing graduates in Victoria have failed to secure a graduate role, a dramatic shift from the previous year, when a vast majority found graduate roles after graduation. This is a devastating failure in workforce planning from the Allan Labor government. Graduate nurse programs are not an option; they are essential. Without them, graduates cannot gain the supervised clinical experience required to transition

into registered nursing roles. The result is that these nurses are being lost at the very start of their career while hospitals report ongoing staff burnout, excessive overtime and double shifts.

Experts have been clear that this outcome was entirely foreseeable. The so-called free TAFE policy triggered a surge of enrolment without a corresponding expansion of graduate positions. This mismanagement has left Victoria with an oversupply of qualified nurses who cannot work even as Australia is facing a projected shortage of more than 70,000 nurses by 2035. Young Victorians were encouraged, indeed persuaded, to train for roles that the Labor government has now failed to provide. This poor planning is misleading, demoralising and short-sighted. I ask the minister: what immediate action will be taken to expand graduate nurse positions, and what is the Allan government doing to retain these graduates in Victoria's health system and ensure that future free TAFE and degree initiatives are matched with realistic employment pathways so young Victorians are never put in this position again?

Small business support

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (18:12): (2511) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Small and Family Business, and the action I seek is simple: explain to Victoria's 718,000 small businesses why the Allan Labor government could not find a single word for them in an 11-page budget speech – not one word, not for the corner shop, not for the family firm and not for the sole trader who rises at the crack of dawn, makes payroll and fills Labor's black holes and potholes. The Treasurer found time for a bike track and a toilet block – vital infrastructure, I am sure – but not a syllable for the sector employing nearly half of Victoria's private workforce. And who does she blame for the cost of doing business? Take a wild guess: President Donald Trump, no less. That is right, Trump is apparently responsible for the CFMEU corruption. Trump set our taxes. Trump tied up small businesses in red tape and left them short of workers. Who knew the man was so busy?

Meanwhile, back in the real world, the $2.5 million for small business support provided last year has vanished. That provided funding for Business Victoria's digital channels, the small business toolkits program and the Small Business Bus. Those programs have been abolished, cut or otherwise creatively allocated elsewhere. In their place the government offers $1.6 million for apparently different purposes: $400,000 for dispute resolution and $1.2 million for something called the Small Business Activation Fund, both funded for one year only and not a cent in the forward estimates. One must ask: what happened to the Small Business Bus? Has it been sold? Is it parked somewhere gathering dust? And the toolkits program – is that locked up? Across the industry, small business and medical research portfolios, new budget commitments have collapsed from $26.3 million to $8.6 million, a 67 per cent cut. I did notice nearly $12 million allocated to help businesses bid for government contracts. Only in Victoria do we spend public money encouraging the private sector to apply for the privilege of working on public projects that will inevitably run over time and over budget: that is what you call a circular economy. What small business really needs is less government, not more. It needs certainty, lower costs and less red tape. The Liberal Party's answer is straightforward: cut red tape, cut land tax, cut payroll tax and abolish five other taxes.

Responses

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (18:16): Ms Ermacora raised a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources. Mr Welch raised a matter for the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop. Dr Mansfield raised a matter for the Minister for Water. Mr Berger and Mr Mulholland raised matters for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Mr Ettershank raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health. Ms Terpstra raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Mr McCracken raised a matter for the Minister for Education. Ms Copsey raised a matter for the Attorney-General; Mr McIntosh for the Minister for Community Sport; Mrs Hermans for the Minister for Planning; Ms Tyrrell for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety; Mrs Broad for the Minister for Police; Mr Limbrick for the Minister for Government Services; Ms Crozier, Ms Purcell and Mr Luu for the Minister for Health; Mr Davis for the minister for energy;

Ms Lovell for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety; and Mrs McArthur for the Minister for Small and Family Business. I will refer them all accordingly.

The PRESIDENT: The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6:16 pm.