

PROOF

Hansard

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

60th Parliament

Tuesday 14 October 2025

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

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, Gaele	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	Lib	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 IndLib from 28 March 2023 until 27 December 2024

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 14 October 2025

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

Bills

Domestic Building Contracts Amendment Bill 2025

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

National Electricity (Victoria) Amendment (VicGrid Stage 2 Reform) Bill 2025

Royal assent

The PRESIDENT (12:03): I have a message from the Governor, dated 16 September:

The Governor informs the Legislative Council that she has, on this day, given the Royal Assent to the under-mentioned Acts of the present Session presented to her by the Clerk of the Parliaments:

36/2025 Domestic Building Contracts Amendment Act 2025

37/2025 Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medication Administration in Residential Aged Care) Act 2025

38/2025 National Electricity (Victoria) Amendment (VicGrid Stage 2 Reform) Act 2025

Papers

Annual reports

The PRESIDENT (12:04): I have some updates to the house following some changes made to tabling requirements under the Financial Management Act 1994. Amendments to the act that came into effect on 20 August 2025 added a requirement for the relevant minister to report to each house the date they received any annual report tabled under section 46 of the Financial Management Act.

The clerks and the Department of Treasury and Finance have agreed that this reporting will ordinarily occur in the tabling letter provided to the Clerk with the report. The tabling letter will then be published alongside the report in the tabled documents database to inform members.

The amendments also introduced the ability for a minister to request an annual report be tabled on a day that neither house is sitting. In anticipation of the Clerk potentially receiving a large volume of reports to be tabled on a non-sitting day, the Clerk has put in place a deadline of 2 pm for ministers to submit documents required for tabling. This is to ensure the administration work required for tabling on a non-sitting day can be completed and all requests actioned. The guides for tabling on the website will be updated to reflect these changes.

Members

Shadow ministry

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:06): I just want to advise the house of a number of shadow ministerial responsibility changes. A list of these will be available in the papers office.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Employment

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:06): (1061) My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, this week a breakdown of ABS data by the Australian Industry Group has shown that only one of every 10 jobs in the financial year 2023–24 were created in the private sector. The AIG analysis showed that the private sector lost 3900 jobs last year. Treasurer, why have private sector jobs bombed so disastrously in Victoria under your government?

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Regional Development) (12:07): I thank Mr Davis for his question. At the outset, Mr Davis, I actually put out a press release on Thursday 18 September, just before we had a bit of a break from Parliament. In this release I relied on the latest ABS statistics. What that showed is that in Victoria the economy and employment are strong and they are growing, and these statistics back it up. They were released on the day that I released it – 18 September 2025 – as opposed to the *Herald Sun* and AIG’s analysis, which included outdated statistics. I think it would be useful to point to this. We have an additional 32,400 Victorians who found jobs in August, which obviously was not part of the analysis that you referred to in your question. This is the highest growth of jobs in the nation. The jobs boost propels Victoria’s total employment to 3.82 million. We are at a record level.

In relation to your specific question about non-market and market jobs and the private sector, Mr Davis, the proposition in your question that nine out of 10 jobs are not created in the private sector is actually not right. Again, I repeat that our economy is thriving. It is a direct result of our investment and our policy settings. Many, many jobs are created in Victoria because we get on and build infrastructure – construction jobs, support jobs and administration jobs for those important projects that Victorians can rely on time and time again. If you use the latest available data from the ABS, Victoria’s market sector jobs growth is within 2 percentage points of New South Wales and Queensland over the year to date at March 2025 while our non-market sector growth is broadly in line with the national average.

Mr Davis, whilst you and other Liberal Party members will be quoted in the media as talking down this state, I will continue to point to the accurate stats and the most available stats and continue to talk our state up, because that is what Victorians deserve.

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:09): The Treasurer has put her spin on all of this, but the AIG has warned the state’s economy is in decay. The AIG also said:

Other states are successfully feeding off Victoria’s malaise and investment and jobs growth that would normally be created for the state increasingly headed interstate and even overseas.

Saul Eslake said:

The biggest risk (of this trend continuing) is a further decline in Victorians’ material living standards relative to the rest of Australia ...

I ask, Treasurer: do you accept some responsibility for Victoria’s parlous state? It is becoming in fact the sick man of Australia.

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Regional Development) (12:10): Again, Mr Davis, this is not spin, these are facts. At 11:50 this morning the NAB business survey came out. Business conditions in Victoria are up 2 points to 5 points – Australian rate unchanged. Business confidence is up 4 points to 8 points in Victoria and up 3 points to 7 points in Australia. Mr Davis, business growth in Victoria is outstripping the nation. Business confidence continues to grow. There is always more to do. I will not rest just on the statistics. I will continue to work with business, continue to invite investment and continue to work with private industry to grow our economy, but I also will not talk down those public sector jobs that make sure that our economy can continue to be healthy, live well and grow well. That is aged care, that is health care and that is all of those support services that Victorians rely on not only to live well but to do other jobs in the economy.

Community safety

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO (Northern Metropolitan) (12:11): (1062) My question is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Minister, the Centre for Innovative Justice at RMIT University in collaboration with Africause, a community-led organisation, has developed a culturally appropriate, holistic, evidence-based restorative justice model to address harms experienced and needs in the African diaspora. Minister, your Labor government was presented with this model in August 2024 but

shamefully rejected funding this model. Minister, can you please explain why your government has refused to fund this evidence-based model to support multicultural communities to achieve community-led solutions?

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12:12): I thank the member for that question. This particular area is outside of the multicultural affairs portfolio and in fact sits with the justice ministers; however, I am happy to talk to the other supports through the multicultural affairs portfolio that our government provides to the very diverse African community. Of course there are many different cultural backgrounds within that community here in Victoria. The 2024–25 budget has delivered \$17.2 million of support through both the multicultural affairs and education portfolios in support of a particular piece of work, which is the *Victorian African Communities Action Plan*. That is all about making sure that we are working closely with community leaders and members of those communities in different parts of our state on extremely successful programs, such as the homework club programs which are keeping young people engaged in school. We know that that is a critical factor when it comes to preventing people from disengaging from school and perhaps engaging in behaviour that is not going to see them thrive as young adults. We have also provided \$24 million since 2018–19 to deliver the specific action plan that has been developed through close work with the African communities consultative committee, which is co-chaired by Pauline Richards, the member for Cranbourne.

In light of the some of the recent pressures within the African community, particularly the South Sudanese community, and the shocking events that we saw in Cobblebank recently, I want to just take a moment to again reiterate my deep condolences to the families and the whole community, who have been so significantly impacted by the shocking murder of those two young boys. Our government has been engaging very closely across a number of different portfolios with the South Sudanese community in particular to talk about what other supports the community needs from government to ensure that they recover from this particular event and that they also are working closely with their young people on making sure that crime prevention and community safety are at the heart of that work.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO (Northern Metropolitan) (12:15): The Premier has said in her own media release that Labor wants ‘locals to bring local solutions to government’. Minister, your Labor government has been sitting on these community-led solutions for over one year now. Labor’s failure to back this model undermines social cohesion and denies the African diaspora the equitable support it deserves. Minister, will you commit to supporting Africause with their solutions, which have been handed to your government on a silver platter?

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12:15): I thank the member for her supplementary question. It is not appropriate for me to talk about funding for particular individual organisations on the floor of the chamber. There is a proper process which each department undertakes around grant applications. All of those grants have guidelines which community organisations are required to adhere to. I can only speak for those grant programs that I am responsible for in the multicultural affairs portfolio, and those grant streams cover various different things. I have recently announced, with the Premier, that there will be a \$5 million social cohesion fund that will be available to support communities, and the guidelines will be issued soon.

Ministers statements: Port Phillip Bay and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar site

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Skills and TAFE, Minister for Water) (12:16): Anyone who has visited Geelong and the Bellarine understands the importance of our Ramsar wetlands. That is why I was pleased to join the member for Bellarine Alison Marchant at Milly’s beach in St Leonards to announce that we are extending this protection. In my capacity as Minister for Water, I have formally nominated an expansion of Ramsar sites to the Commonwealth. Built on years of community advocacy and deep consultation, we are nominating four wetland areas for inclusion in the Port Phillip Bay and Bellarine Ramsar site. This will expand the existing Ramsar site by roughly

1300 hectares, strengthening Victoria’s status as an internationally significant destination for nature lovers and ecotourists. These areas include the Edwards Point–Swan Bay wildlife reserve and coastal reserve, where we made the announcement, the Lake Connemara complex conservation reserve, the Moolap wetlands and the Point Cook–Cheetham coastal park and marine sanctuary.

The Port Phillip Bay and Bellarine Ramsar site was first listed in 1982 as one of Victoria’s internationally acclaimed wetlands. This provides an essential refuge and important breeding habitat for waterbirds and fish, including migratory shorebirds flying as far as Alaska. Ramsar sites are of international significance and attract tourists from all over the world to come and experience our unique wetlands. This supports nature walks, birdwatching and ecotourism. It was fantastic to share this moment with so many of our local volunteers, the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and Parks Victoria. Protecting our wetlands is a team effort, and this is recognition for those who put so much of their own time and effort into protecting these important spaces.

Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:19): (1063) My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, given the white-hot anger across rural Victoria regarding the new Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund tax, can you confirm that you personally received the urgent joint letter, dated 15 September 2025, from mayors and councillors representing more than 20 rural, regional and metropolitan councils, which was also sent to the Premier and the Minister for Local Government. I ask: will you finally respond to the receipt of this letter?

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Regional Development) (12:19): I thank Mrs McArthur for her question. At the outset, in relation to correspondence that I have received in relation to this matter, particularly from councils, I have personally responded to the correspondence that came in. In terms of the amount of councils, I do not have the list, but I can tell you that before I went on leave I responded to all of those letters personally to make sure that I had responded to them, and my advice is that I responded to all of that correspondence in July. I can get you the figures in relation to the specific councils that wrote to me. Many did with different questions, and there was a lot of misinformation. Probably the overarching theme, particularly from regional councils, was wanting to make sure that the contributions from their constituents and their ratepayers were going to go back into their communities. So I took the opportunity to ensure that I could reiterate why we have had the introduction of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund, and that is about raising –

Bev McArthur: On a point of order, President, this is about a joint letter dated 15 September 2025, not from individual councillors or mayors but from mayors and councillors representing more than 20 rural councils, and they have not received the minister’s reply.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The minister was being relevant.

Jaclyn SYMES: The point I was making, Mrs McArthur, is that you have referred to 20 councils that have made a representation to me, maybe multiple times. What I am saying is that not only have I responded to all of those letters and addressed all the questions in them, but I have also pointed –

David Davis: On a point of order, President, this was a very specific question about one letter. It was not about a general run of letters from different councils and so forth. It was a single letter, and the minister needs to respond about that specific letter.

The PRESIDENT: I took it the Treasurer responded in her first sentence when she said, ‘I have responded to all correspondence on this.’

David Davis: On a further point of order, President, this is the September letter. The Treasurer responded to the July letter, and this is the September letter. She is talking about July letters that she may have responded to, but this is a specific question.

The PRESIDENT: I think, Mr Davis, you are debating the point of order. I believe the Treasurer has been relevant to the question.

Jaclyn SYMES: Mrs McArthur, as I was saying, of the councils that I think are represented in the letter you are referring to, they have all received personal correspondence from me, because they have asked similar questions. As you have referred to a particular letter, I can confirm that I have read that letter, because I was on leave when it was brought to the office's attention. All of the issues in that letter have been responded to in various ways to the authors of that letter. That is not to say that they will not receive a follow-up repeat of the information that has been provided.

It is also important to note that we have had heavy engagement with the MAV, which is obviously the appropriate body to represent local councils in the state of Victoria. Those conversations have resulted in a number of changes to ESV. You will remember the committee stage in relation to the information that we have provided to them, as well as financial support for any issues that they had in relation to implementation of any of the small changes to the existing levy that they have been doing for many, many years.

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:23): Thank you, Minister. Clearly you have not responded to this particular letter, otherwise all these mayors would not have assembled on the doorstep of Treasury Place the other day to resubmit the letter and call for an answer to the questions. Local governments are not activists. They are not partisans. They are respected civic leaders acting out of duty to their communities. They have been forced to collect the government's levy, absorb the community's outrage and funnel hundreds of millions of dollars from across Victorian councils straight into Spring Street's budget black hole. Treasurer, will you and the Premier meet with these councils to discuss this deeply damaging tax?

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Regional Development) (12:24): Mrs McArthur, I have been around for a while in politics, and I have no objection to people having differing opinions. What I do object to is blatant mistruth and lying about the impact of a particular thing. You know that every single cent of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund goes to emergency services. Standing out there and telling fire-prone communities, who are often fearful of the impact of climate change and increased risk of fires, floods and storms on their communities, that this money is not going to them is deplorable behaviour – and you are repeatedly doing it. You can object to this levy; I do not have a problem with that. But be truthful to your communities.

David Davis: On a point of order, President, the question was actually specific: whether the Treasurer and the Premier would meet.

A member: Did you listen?

David Davis: I did.

A member: And what did she say?

David Davis: I don't think she did say that she would.

The PRESIDENT: I am not too sure what the point of order was, but I still think that the Treasurer was relevant to the question.

Greyhound racing

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (12:26): (1064) My question is for the minister representing the Minister for Racing. Last month Greyhound Racing Victoria announced a \$2 million redevelopment of the Traralgon racetrack. The track cost \$5 million to build in 2022, with \$3 million of that funding contributed by the Victorian government. It was described as a world first in welfare-focused design, yet within barely a year of opening five dogs were dead, and the track was rightfully closed down as a result. With another multimillion-dollar redevelopment now underway, there has

been little transparency and accountability surrounding the decision-making process, including how funding priorities are determined and whether the public has been adequately informed about the justification for further investment in a facility that has already been proven to be deadly. Can the minister advise the sources and amounts of funding for the Traralgon racetrack redevelopment?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice) (12:26): I thank Ms Purcell for her question and her interest in this matter. I do note that Greyhound Racing Victoria also have a strong partnership with me as the Minister for Corrections, but this question in particular is not about our greyhound program in our Tarrengower facility so I might refer this one to the Minister for Racing in the other place as requested. I thank you for your passion, and I am sure the Minister for Racing will respond in line with the standing orders.

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (12:27): Thank you, Minister, for referring that on. The tragic deaths of five greyhounds within the last seven months of the previous Traralgon track's operation should have served as a clear warning sign about the inherent dangers of greyhound racing and the failure of so-called welfare-focused designs to protect dogs from being killed. No racetrack can be made safe. Cook Model, Atomic Jax, Udellar Bale, Booker Knowledge and Annie Coin all lost their lives as a result of this track. Given these five deaths resulted in the track being closed last time, can the minister advise how many dead dogs the government will accept in order to measure the success of the new Traralgon track rebuild?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice) (12:28): I thank Ms Purcell for her passion and her question in relation to this issue. I will make sure that it is passed on to the Minister for Racing in the other place for a response in line with the standing orders.

Ministers statements: youth justice workforce

[NAMES AWAITING VERIFICATION]

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice) (12:28): Today is Australasian Youth Justice Acknowledgement Day, and I am pleased to update the house on the outstanding work of Victoria's youth justice workforce. Recently I had the opportunity to recognise our workforce at the 2025 youth justice awards held at the State Library Victoria. These annual awards honour the extraordinary dedication of the people who work every day with some of the most vulnerable and challenging young people who have contact with the justice system. They do not just manage risk, they create opportunity.

The awards recognise excellence across key areas that underpin a strong youth justice system. The awards included the Aboriginal youth justice award, won by Peter Shane for improving outcomes for Aboriginal children and making a real difference; the diversity and inclusion award, won by Caitlin Emmanuel, honouring inclusive practice and advocacy for young people from diverse backgrounds; the health, safety and wellbeing award, won by the west metro youth justice community team, recognising staff who go above and beyond in creating safe supportive workplaces; the collaboration and innovation award, won jointly by the system performance and workforce support and the youth justice group finance teams, celebrating creative thinking and new ideas that drive better outcomes; and of course the highest honour, the youth justice medal, awarded to Brooke, someone who has demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment to better outcomes for young people and their families. More than 60 staff were also recognised and acknowledged for two decades of service – a remarkable contribution to safer communities and brighter futures. These workers do not seek the spotlight but they certainly deserve it. They rebuild lives, and in doing so make everyone safer. On this acknowledgement day I extend my warmest congratulations to every award recipient and to all those recognised for their long service. Their work may not always make the headlines, but it does make a difference. Thank you on behalf of the government.

Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (12:30): (1065) My question is for the Minister for Industrial Relations. Minister, it was recently revealed by the *Age* that members of the CFMEU have been holding clandestine meetings with notorious gangland figure Mick Gatto. Minister, can you reassure the house that members of the CFMEU working on Allan Labor government Big Build sites have not met and are not meeting with any gangland figures?

The PRESIDENT: I am just struggling as far as the minister's responsibility –

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: I am happy to hear points of order, if it helps, but I am just struggling with –

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: I am not going to rule it out. I am happy to externalise my thoughts here. I am just thinking that –

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: Listen, I am trying to be helpful here. I am trying to work out whether – Mr Mulholland?

Evan Mulholland: If I can assist, President, the minister is the Minister for Industrial Relations. The minister has previously spoken publicly, both in this chamber and outside of it, about her responsibilities when it comes to industrial relations activities, particularly since last year and what happened with the CFMEU. There have been several pieces of legislation cracking down on associated gangland links and bkie links on construction sites, which the minister has spoken to, so I think it is in the interests of this chamber and I think the question does go to the point that this seems to be still happening on Victorian construction sites.

The PRESIDENT: That was helpful. We are all in this together. Thank you for helping me, and I will put the question to the minister.

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Regional Development) (12:32): I thank Mr Welch for his first question as shadow minister for industrial relations. As you know, Mr Welch – because I am on record saying this, and I will continue to say it – I and the government, and I assume probably most people in the room, have zero tolerance for any type of illegal behaviour on worksites, and that extends to worksites that involve Victorian government projects. In relation to your question, I think I agree that Mr Mulholland's contribution was quite helpful, because as he indicated, we have had several pieces of legislation that are designed to crack down on behaviour that has come to light in the construction industry and indeed have broader applications to other areas such as labour hire organisations and the like. We have responded comprehensively to the allegations of criminal and intimidatory behaviour involving the CFMEU, including commissioning the Wilson review. We have already had legislation implementing the Wilson review recommendations in relation particularly to a complaints line and referral line, and there is also the stop line that VIDA are working with. So to Mr Welch's question: if he has knowledge of any concerning behaviour – Mr Welch or anybody else – then I would encourage him to refer any such information so that it can be dealt with appropriately.

In relation to other measures to strengthen government bodies' ability to respond to allegations of criminal and other unlawful conduct in the construction sector, this year's budget included \$6 million to implement the full suite of recommendations, so we will continue to act on the conduct that is brought to our attention in relation to other criminal changes we have made. The anti-association laws were legislation that I brought in, not as industrial relations minister but as Attorney-General. So there are a range of measures that I can continue to point to, Mr Welch, and upon your new appointment I would encourage you to reach out to my office and arrange a briefing. I can ensure that you have –

Members interjecting.

Jaclyn SYMES: Mr Welch is nodding. With all of these questions, you can have a comprehensive understanding of the suite of measures that are new. The industrial regime changes quite dynamically, quite often, so we can give you the latest advice on what we are doing in Victoria. And indeed if you have got questions about federal matters, because it is a federal system, we can direct you to that as well.

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (12:35): I thank the minister for her answer. It is zero tolerance but zero effectiveness, clearly. Minister, two construction industry sources confirmed to the *Age* recently that CFMEU workers walked off the site on the more than \$10 billion West Gate Tunnel Project over an industrial dispute in another state. I ask: is it acceptable that the CFMEU are holding Victorian taxpayers to ransom over a far-flung industrial dispute interstate, and what action will you take to ensure that this never happens again?

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Regional Development) (12:36): Mr Welch, I do fail to see how your supplementary question relates to your substantive question. ‘Let’s just use the term CFMEU in every question and then they all relate to one another’ apparently is the new standing order for this chamber. But in relation to the matters that Mr Welch has raised, these are matters in another state and would be –

Members interjecting.

Jaclyn SYMES: Can I finish? And in relation to protected industrial action or otherwise, it would be a matter for the commission.

Child protection

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:37): (1066) My question is to the Minister for Children. Minister, reports emerged yesterday that a girl with special needs was allegedly raped by a teenage boy who was housed with her, and after claims he had molested her were ignored for several months. Minister, you are responsible for these vulnerable children and young people who are under your care, so why were these claims ignored by your government?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:37): I thank Ms Crozier for her question. I thought with a new administration over there we might actually get some more compassionate, empathetic questions that relate to those who call our residential care system their home.

As I have indicated in this place before, our residential care system is indeed a home. It is a place where often traumatised young people, people who are indeed most vulnerable because of the circumstances that have landed them in those residences in the first place, are provided an environment in which they are cared for. As of July this year all residential care placements are in therapeutic care placements, which is a vast improvement on the residential care system that we inherited.

In relation to specific allegations in relation to specific incidents, I cannot comment on individual matters so far as they relate to individual children. But what I will say is that there is a very thorough process that is followed when there are allegations of abuse. Where there are allegations of abuse that meet certain thresholds, they would obviously be reported to the police. That is obviously the case. These are very complex environments in which children and young people who come from complex lives live, and the circumstances that have landed them in those homes in the first place are indeed often traumatic and certainly complex. The systems that are built around them, the therapeutic supports that exist in all of those homes now for all of the children, are designed to ensure that children are cared for, safe and have the same opportunities as other children – to live a life of purpose and to thrive.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:39): Thank you, Minister, for that response. You said there is a thorough process, but these claims, or these concerns, were ignored for several months, so I do not know how thorough the process actually is. Minister, in the same article a senior government appointee in the child protection system is reported as saying, ‘it is fact’ that many of these children are regular offenders. They said:

The evidence is very clear that there is a really big overlap between children who are in the care system, especially residential care, and children who end up engaging in crime and entering into youth justice ...

You have just said that the residential care system is their home, yet these issues with these vulnerable children and young people are clearly not working given the issue I raised in the substantive question. So my question to you is: why won’t you take responsibility for failing these vulnerable young people?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:40): Sadly, Ms Crozier, I had a feeling that that was where you were going. As I said, residential care is not a custodial setting. Residential care is a home for young people who have come from complex lives. Indeed our government has committed \$548 million in recent years to ensuring that what wraps around those children and young people are therapeutic supports. In Victoria we actually have – and I am sure you will be very interested in my upcoming ministers statement, which talks to the vast number of children who are in our out-of-home care system who are actually in kinship care, the highest rates in the country – in terms of out-of-home care the majority of children and young people are placed within family environments.

What I would say too – and it is important that the fundamental premise of your question is rejected, or your supplementary question, if you can indeed even call it that – is the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that Victoria had the lowest rate in Australia of young people aged 10 to 17 under youth justice supervision who had also interacted with – (*Time expired*)

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:41): I move:

That the minister’s answer be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Ministers statements: Middle East conflict

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12:42): Today I want to extend my thoughts and our government’s support to Victoria’s Jewish and Palestinian communities. The historic peace deal and the release of all living hostages have provided a glimmer of hope in this devastating chapter in the history of Israel and Palestine. For the families of the hostages who have been displaced, they can now return home. Two million Palestinians in Gaza have been displaced, have lost their homes and their loved ones. We are all hoping that this agreement will begin the steps to a better, peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians alike. To those Victorians who have family and community in Palestine and Israel I say this: we stand with all of you – Jewish, Muslim and Christian.

The last two years have cut deep wounds and inflicted much trauma, and it has divided communities in an unprecedented way. But with this hope for peace comes a hope for healing, and our government will always be there for you. We will stand with our proud Jewish community who have lived with an unprecedented rise in antisemitism and the nefarious influence of foreign actors, and we will stand with our most newly arrived communities from Gaza. I have had the honour of meeting so many of these brave and beautiful individuals, and they remind us that we must always promote efforts to come together and connect to build bridges and remove barriers. Our multiculturalism is our greatest strength, and only together can we nurture the multicultural Victoria that we are all so proud of.

Child protection

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:43): (1067) My question is again to the Minister for Children. Minister, media reports yesterday claim whistleblowers from within the child protection system have said children as young as 10 were ‘recidivist offenders’ and the police were well acquainted with those who regularly abscond from residential units to commit crimes. Minister, when are you informed that a child in the child protection system has been involved in a crime?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:44): I am pleased to be able to continue the line of questioning that Ms Crozier has gone down, because I did not quite get to finishing my point earlier. Indeed is it a very similar premise that is underlying where she is coming from. Again I remind those in this house that those in the children protection system are actually in a home, they are not in a custodial setting, and it is the responsibility of the child protection system to provide those children and young people with a safe and nurturing home and not –

Tom McIntosh interjected.

Georgie Crozier: Mr McIntosh, this is a really serious issue and I cannot hear the minister. On a point of order, President, I wonder if you could just ask the backbench to not interject on this. It is incredibly important. Vulnerable children are committing horrendous crimes.

The PRESIDENT: Can I ask for a bit of order from the chamber.

Lizzie BLANDTHORN: It is a bit rich from Ms Crozier when often I cannot hear myself over her own interjections. I will again say for the benefit of the house that I reject the premise that Ms Crozier is putting, which is that those who are in our child protection system are therefore by definition those who are out there becoming criminals – that is what her assertion is. What I want to tell this chamber is that the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that Victoria had the lowest rate in Australia of young people aged 10 to 17 under youth justice supervision who had also interacted with the child protection system in the past decade – eight per 10,000 according to the AIHW.

Ms Crozier, I know you would like to be able to draw an absolute line between youth justice offending and those in our child protection system, but one does not equal the other. Those children and young people who are in our child protection system are there for child protection. They are indeed vulnerable children and young people who have come from particularly complex situations, often unable to live safely with those who love them most or who are meant to love them and care for them the most, and indeed are the responsibility of the child protection system.

Georgie Crozier: On a point of order, President, I have been listening to the minister’s answer. This is a very simple question. It was about when the minister is informed that a child in the child protection system has been involved in a crime. I would ask you to draw her back to this very simple question and answer it.

The PRESIDENT: I think that in responding to the point of order the minister rejected the premise of the question, which makes it difficult.

Georgie Crozier: She is not informed.

The PRESIDENT: The minister has got a minute and 20 seconds.

Lizzie BLANDTHORN: I am rejecting the insinuation that those who are in the child protection system, those children and young people who have come from particularly complex, often traumatic lives, who are seeking refuge in a home – from a child protection perspective it is the role of child protection to provide them with that home. It is not a custodial setting, and it is not the responsibility of the child protection system to provide a custodial setting. In response to the insinuation that children who are in the care of child protection are indeed criminals, which is what those opposite would

characterise them as, I use the AIHW data to show that eight in 10,000 is the number we are talking about, and indeed it is the lowest in the country.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:47): President, that is the most extraordinary answer. This is a really simple question, and you interjected yourself saying that she is not informed.

Minister, on numerous occasions I have come in here and asked you questions which you continue to refuse to answer, like you have for this question, whether it is a child who is on bail or even these questions that whistleblowers in your own department are talking about. Minister, if the President has said, as he has asserted, you are not made aware, why won't you insist that you are informed, given you are responsible for these children who are committing extremely serious crimes, endangering themselves and the community?

Michael Galea: On a point of order, President, it is not appropriate for Ms Crozier to be either misrepresenting or reflecting on the President.

The PRESIDENT: I was trying not to even breathe, so I did not interject on anything, but you can continue with your question.

Georgie CROZIER: I apologise for that. I thought you were saying that the minister said she was not informed. My question is: if you are not informed, why aren't you informed? If you are informed, at what point are you informed?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:49): The point I was making for those opposite is that the child protection system is indeed a system of child protection. The systems of corrective services, of youth justice and of bail are matters for those ministers with the responsibility for justice. What I am saying is that it is a responsibility of the child protection system to provide a safe home for those who cannot live safely in their own homes.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:49): I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

Housing

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (12:49): (1068) My question is for Minister for Housing. As part of the relocation process for residents living in the public housing towers that are being demolished, households are provided with offers for alternative homes, which historically residents could decline if they were inappropriate for their needs. Homes Victoria are telling residents that they are no longer actively seeking another home or more offers for households who decline inappropriate relocation offers. What does this actually mean practically for those people?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts) (12:50): I do not accept the premise of your question insofar as it seeks to assert that Homes Victoria is no longer proceeding with relocation requests where an offer of inappropriate housing is declined – I think I heard you correctly. To the extent that you are asserting that that is the case, I would again invite you to consider the relocations process through the lens that we are approaching it – namely, that the residents and the community are at the heart of what is occurring. Dedicated relocations officers – and again, there is a dedicated officer assigned to each resident and each household as far as that relocations process is concerned – take great care in understanding what the needs, the priorities and the aspirations of households are. They work very hard to make sure that they have a deep understanding of what it is that renters want and need, including the connection that so many residents have to the place of their house at the time that we are having those engagements.

As I have said here and beyond this place many times, the redevelopment of estates is about providing more and better homes. We have got that program underway across a number of estates, and the towers

will be demolished once all renters have moved out. As at 3 October over 99 per cent of the 484 households in the tranche 1 towers in Flemington and North Melbourne have either moved or are getting ready to move. Across North Melbourne and Flemington 416 households have already moved, while a further 66 households are getting ready to move. We continue to progress our renter relocation program, and this is about making sure that offers can be made to households based on the areas that they nominate and the requirements that they have, including as they relate to accessibility and to amenity. This resident- and community-first approach is very much underpinned by renter voice and, as I said, understanding and developing that very deep approach to renters' housing and social support needs. The residential relocations team also has renter and community engagement activities, and we have continued to increase the level of resident relocation support.

When we source households for homes and for residents, they are based on needs and preferences, and they reflect the information that households provide in the course of that relocation process. So I do not accept the premise of the question. If you have specific instances, however, please do raise them with me and my office.

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (12:53): I guess what I would be interested in understanding, Minister, is what mechanisms are in place for residents to appeal or request further consideration. If they feel their reason for refusing an offer – say, for disability access or insufficient space for their family – has not been properly acknowledged in the offer that has been made, what avenues do they have to appeal those offers and have a more appropriate home provided for them?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts) (12:54): Dr Mansfield, we are not forcing residents to accept offers; let us just be really, really clear about that. When offers are made to residents as part of the relocation process, those offers are made by reference to and in consideration of a number of factors, including the sorts of examples that you have just outlined: the number of bedrooms, the area or the region which is nominated by the household in question, any accessibility or mobility requirements and proximity to place, whether that is healthcare services, early childhood, education or employment.

Again, when you talk about avenues of appeal, they are actually at the heart of the community-first approach and the renter-first approach. Relocation officers are in constant dialogue with households about what it is that they want via a process whereby offers are sourced and offers are made. This is not a one-step process; it is not a transaction which occurs, perhaps in the context that you have outlined it. If you have specific examples, please do let me know, and we can have further conversations.

Ministers statements: foster and kinship carers

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:55): I rise to update the house on the critical supports provided by kinship and foster carers for children in out-of-home care. In Victoria we lead the nation with 94.6 per cent of children who cannot live with their families being cared for in home-based care. Kinship care is the largest and fastest growing option for children who cannot live with their immediate family, and again Victoria leads the nation with just over 80 per cent of all placements with a kinship carer. When a kinship care placement cannot be found, we have a dedicated foster care system with people who are ready to provide a home. Over the last few weeks I have joined in celebrations with both foster and kinship carers to recognise their contributions as part of Foster Care Week and Global Kinship Care Week events.

In meeting with carers, I am always struck by their passionate support and willingness to go the extra mile for the children in their care. They open up their homes and their hearts to our children and young people who are in need of extra support. They are people like Lesley Brechin, who won this year's Foster Career Award and who has been a foster carer for 21 years and cared for over 40 children and young people. Lesley's first foster care placement was with a young sibling group. The children reached adulthood in Lesley's care, and they have remained connected until this day. This connection

is a testament to the nurturing family environment and exceptional care that is provided. I take this opportunity to again acknowledge the incredible care and dedication of our kinship, foster and permanent carers for everything they do day in and day out.

The Allan Labor government is proud to support carers, including through the care support help desk and the Carer Kafe. Our investment enables the Carer Kafe to deliver training for carers, including around better understanding and supports for children who have experienced trauma. I invite more Victorians to consider becoming a kinship, foster or permanent carer and to join the wonderful team of carers across our state supporting children and young people to be safe and happy and to thrive.

Written responses

The PRESIDENT (12:57): Minister Erdogan will get the answers from the Minister for Racing in line with the standing orders for Ms Purcell.

Georgie Crozier: On a point of order, President, on my last question to the minister, I do not believe she answered it. It was a very simple question, and she went nowhere near to answering my question.

The PRESIDENT: I am more than happy to review that, and I will get back to the chamber as soon as is practical.

Constituency questions

Southern Metropolitan Region

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (12:58): (1849) My question today is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. How will the new Metro Tunnel benefit commuters on the Frankston line? It is confirmed: the Metro Tunnel is going to open in December, a year ahead of schedule. We know the Liberals said it could not be done. They did not want it, they did not fund it and they said it was a hoax, but here we are, just weeks away from the Metro Tunnel opening. It is going to change the way we move around our city. Following the summer start, from 1 February, with the big switch, people from the Frankston line once again will be able to catch trains around the city loop, helping them to get to work, to study and to move around sooner. The Metro Tunnel is going to transform Melbourne, including for residents right across Southern Metropolitan Melbourne. Christmas is going to come early this year, and I can hardly wait.

Eastern Victoria Region

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (12:59): (1850) My question is to the Minister for Environment, and it relates to both the Silverleaves and the Inverloch Surf Life Saving Club communities. Due in August this year, the Silverleaves adaptation plan was finally released yesterday, and locals are absolutely desperate for stage 1 works (1) to be classified (2) to begin and (3) for a timeline to be provided. Also, wild weather last week has further eroded the sand dunes and compromised the geotextile sandbags at the surf lifesaving club such that there are only 8 metres between the edge of the beach and the foundations of the surf club. Minister, what I want to know is: will you respond to the community concerns and provide a plan for the Silverleaves community but also urgently do some works to protect the surf lifesaving club at Inverloch?

Northern Metropolitan Region

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO (Northern Metropolitan) (13:00): (1851) My question today is to the Minister for Disability. Minister, Bianca is a 22-year-old woman in my electorate living with autism, endometriosis, chronic pain and complex PTSD. Her conditions are permanent and severely limit her capacity to work. Despite this, she has faced immense difficulty accessing the disability support pension through Centrelink. The system is complex, the language inaccessible and many health professionals struggle to provide evidence that meets federal requirements. Even with a support worker, Bianca is stuck in a system that does not reflect the reality of living with multiple chronic

conditions. Minister, what will you do to advance support for young people with complex disabilities like Bianca to better navigate these systems, access advocacy and avoid falling through the cracks?

South-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:01): (1852) My question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and it concerns the Metro Tunnel. With the summer start coming in December, passengers on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines will be able to try out the new Metro Tunnel for themselves. With 240 new services each week on top of the existing timetable, they will be able to then go to all of the new five underground stations, see those connections for themselves and take part in that experience before the big switch comes on 1 February, when we will see a thousand new weekly services across the Metro network to provide that turn-up-and-go service across so much more of metropolitan Melbourne. There are going to be more services, which means more frequency, which means more convenient interchanges and it also means less crowding, so it will not be like the Liberal Party frontbench – we will not all be crammed in together. More services provide more opportunities for all people across the city. Minister, how will this big switch benefit the Cranbourne and Pakenham line that I represent?

Southern Metropolitan Region

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (13:02): (1853) My question is for the Minister for Children. My constituent writes that they are concerned about the management of the Park Towers Community Pantry in South Melbourne. The president of the Park Towers tenant management has written to the board of Park Towers pantry highlighting his concerns about consistent complaints he has received from tenants regarding the violent, abusive and discriminatory conduct by management of the pantry. Given Park Towers houses some very vulnerable people, including women and children, can the minister guarantee that the management of the community pantry has fully complied with all required regulations, including having a current working with children check?

Western Metropolitan Region

David ETTERSHANK (Western Metropolitan) (13:02): (1854) My question is for Gabrielle Williams, the Minister for Public and Active Transport in the other place. My constituent resides in Wyndham Vale, and she recently travelled into Melbourne CBD for a medical appointment. The bus and train connecting services resulted in a 20-minute wait between arriving at Wyndham Vale from Southern Cross and the bus to get her home. Getting a taxi or rideshare is prohibitively expensive for my constituent. The bus–rail coordination guidelines recently tabled in Parliament show that Wyndham Vale scores lowest against the Department of Transport and Planning benchmarks for bus – train coordination wait times under 10 minutes, with only 32 per cent compliance, compared to 98 per cent in Sandringham, for example. My constituent asks: given the government is spending eye-watering amounts on the Suburban Rail Loop, when will bus route and timetable changes be implemented to simply allow westies to access timely public transport services like the rest of Melbourne?

Western Victoria Region

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (13:03): (1855) My question to the Minister for Health concerns a shocking example of failed regional health care in my electorate. A patient presented with chest pain in the urgent care department at 2:45 pm. The consulting medical practitioner requested an ambulance within half an hour, yet the ambulance finally arrived to collect the patient at 8:45 pm – nearly 6 hours later. This was not a worried family overstating a request from home, it was in hospital, with the doctor's explicit, clinical judgment fearing for the patient's safety. Ambulance Victoria currently fails to meet its own benchmark of responding to 85 per cent of code 1 emergencies within 15 minutes. In the latest quarter, only 65 per cent did so, hence cases like that suffered by my constituent. Minister, how can such extreme delays still occur, and what are you going to stop this risk to life on a daily basis?

Western Victoria Region

Joe McCRACKEN (Western Victoria) (13:05): (1856) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I was at a community drive and rally in Maryborough on Saturday where hundreds of locals attended. The message was clear: locals want to keep their VicRoads. After the Victorian government sold off half of VicRoads in recent years, the future of VicRoads in Maryborough has been unclear. It is so bad that VicRoads are even asking the Central Goldfields shire to pick up the tab. It is called VicRoads; it should be funded by the Victorian government. It is a core service of government. We all know Victoria is broke, so services are being cut in regional Victoria. If VicRoads closes in Maryborough, locals will have to drive over an hour to Bendigo or Ballarat just to access simple services like getting a photo. This is totally unacceptable. So my question to the minister is: will you fund VicRoads in Maryborough or will you continue to ignore the local community?

South-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:06): (1857) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education. Minister, can you please explain why your government is politicising our schools? Schools should be places of education, not indoctrination, but under the Allan Labor government that principle has been wiped off the whiteboard. I recently received an email from a concerned parent – I will simply call the parent Andrew – regarding Labor’s interference in his kid’s primary school in Noble Park. Over the last two years the school received a significant volume, a long string, of ministers, including the Premier, at their campus. So it is no surprise that in their recent newsletter there was a Voice to Parliament item with a ‘yes’ symbol included and details about an inquiry unit which would deal with political issues about immigration. Minister, get your ideology and political propaganda out of our classroom and let parents be parents and children be children.

Northern Victoria Region

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (13:07): (1858) My question is for the Minister for Environment. For the first time in 14 years legislation was introduced to establish Victoria’s first major new national parks. These parks are home to over 380 rare and threatened plant and animal species, including the greater glider. However, the bill permits recreational deer hunting across most public land as well as some areas within the three new national parks. This raises immediate concerns about its impact on native wildlife and the preservation of these protected areas. In Victoria 1080 poison is routinely used to lethally control what our government would deem ‘problem species’, including our native dingoes. It is an indiscriminate poison with no known antidote and poses a severe risk to all wildlife, including non-target species. As these new national parks cover significant parts of my electorate of Northern Victoria, can the minister confirm whether 1080 poison will be used in them?

North-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:08): (1859) My constituency matter is for the Minister for Environment. Recently Cleanaway have decided to double their plans for a waste-to-energy plant in the growing suburb of Wollert in my electorate. It is true that Victoria does need to decarbonise and effectively deal with landfill, but the solution to this is not to burn rubbish in growing residential suburbs or in their vicinity. The incinerator will risk polluting air near residential homes and put future generations in Wollert at risk. The City of Whittlesea and the mayor Martin Taylor have made it absolutely clear that the location and proximity to homes is just not appropriate. Even the minister’s cabinet colleague the Minister for Energy and Resources herself has petitioned against this plant, seemingly to no avail. Will the minister listen to the voice of my community in Wollert and Epping, block the Wollert incinerator outright and save the community months, years and decades of anguish if this project goes ahead?

Western Metropolitan Region

Trung LUU (Western Metropolitan) (13:09): (1860) My constituency question is for the Minister for Ambulance Services regarding ambulance response times in the west. What is the government's explanation for the ambulance response times for residents in my electorate, which are higher than the statewide response time and are getting worse? I am particular concerned about the response times for those residents living in the outer western suburbs, including in the City of Wyndham, Melton city and Hobsons Bay. Ambulance Victoria data shows that average ambulance code 1 response time for Melton is 16 minutes and 33 seconds; for Hobsons Bay it is 16 minutes and 6 seconds and neighbouring Wyndham is not far behind at 15 minutes and 5 seconds. Code 1 response times apply to those needing urgent paramedic and hospital care. Compare these to response times in other parts of Melbourne, like Banyule at 13 minutes and 31 seconds, Darebin at 13 minutes and 18 seconds and Port Phillip at 14 minutes and 19 seconds. These response times decline the further you go from the CBD, showing disparity between urgent response times in various areas.

Northern Metropolitan Region

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (13:10): (1861) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and it concerns the lack of bus shelters across the north. Minister, my constituents were thrilled that thanks to my advocacy, after hundreds signed my petition, an absolute shocker of a bus stop – you could call it a patch of mud – on Somerton Road at Ravenhill Boulevard in Roxburgh Park finally has had some improvements made. This prompted many of my constituents to come forward with other suggestions. One in particular that constituents constantly raise with me is the bus stop on the corner of Hudson Circuit and Paringa Boulevard in Meadow Heights. They believe it should be indented. Drivers often are bypassing the bus blind into a roundabout, causing accidents and near misses. I ask the minister to investigate this particular bus stop, and I thank the minister for belatedly and finally acting on bus shelters on Somerton Road in Roxburgh Park, thanks to my advocacy.

Southern Metropolitan Region

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (13:11): (1862) Last night I attended a large public meeting in Hawthorn at Glenferrie Primary, convened by John Pesutto, the member for Hawthorn. Ms Crozier and I were both there, as was Max Shifman, property developer, and Jane Oldham from the Boroondara citizens group. There were more than 200 people at the meeting. It was an extraordinary turn-up, and all were opposed to the planning changes – the high-density, high-rise plan of this government to destroy parts of Boroondara. Particularly Hawthorn has been targeted and parts of Kew and Camberwell. This is a serious outcome, and I am asking the minister whether she will attend a reprising of that meeting, a formal public meeting in Hawthorn to explain to the community why she wants to destroy the ambience, the livability, the heritage and the tree canopy in the City of Boroondara in the way she does. This is a do-or-die time for the future of our state and the future of livability. The minister should attend, front up to public meetings and actually explain why she is destroying our city.

Northern Victoria Region

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (13:13): (1863) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Will the minister improve safety on the Calder Highway by installing more kangaroo warning signs? It is a sad fact that the number of wildlife strikes on rural and regional roads in Victoria is rapidly increasing, and better signage is needed for drivers to pay more attention to the risk. Drought is pushing animals that are searching for water and food out of their bush habitat and closer to urban developments and roadsides, where the grass is greener due to urban watering or road run-off. The latest RACV data shows that insurance claims for vehicle collisions with kangaroos will reach record highs in 2025. One of my constituents contacted the Premier's office about the massive increase in kangaroo hits south of Bendigo, but got no response. Now I am backing my constituents' urgent call for kangaroo warning signs on both carriageways of the Calder Highway between the crest of Big Hill and Furness Street in Kangaroo Flat.

Petitions

Casey City Council

Jeff BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) presented a petition bearing 191 signatures:

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the City of Casey's decision to introduce new fees for certain activities on private, freehold land. Citizens living in the City of Casey are living in a cost of living crisis with many struggling to pay for electricity bills during a typical Melbourne summer and others facing high credit card bills after the Christmas festivities. They are now being slapped in the face as the Council has introduced new fees for certain activities on their private, freehold land. The fees will be charged and a permit required for activities such as storing or repairing a recreational vehicle or storing unregistered vehicles for up to 90 days. A permit will also be required for dismantling, repairing or servicing vehicles that are non-commercial. When families are required to make hard decisions like not using their family car or paying registration for that quarter or getting their family car serviced by dealers, the Council has placed even greater pressure by requiring families to fork out hundreds of dollars on new permits and fees for activities on their own property. Dysfunctional councils have plagued Victoria for some time and have required a higher level of government to intervene.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government and the Minister for Local Government to urgently advocate to the City of Casey, and all other local councils, to review fees and permits relating to personal land use and advocate that these councils withdraw any similar permit schemes.

Jeff BOURMAN: I move:

That the petition be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Drivers licences

Gaelle BROAD (Northern Victoria) presented a petition bearing 4168 signatures:

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that Victoria is the only state or territory in Australia that still requires probationary drivers licence holders to be aged 18 years or over. In Victoria, young people living in rural and regional areas with limited or no public transport are disadvantaged, and not everyone has a friend or family member to ferry them around. Reducing the minimum probationary driving age to 17 years in line with other states will remove barriers for young people and open doors for educational and employment opportunities.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to reduce the minimum probationary driving age to 17 years and provide incentives for learner drivers to do professional driver training, like those offered in New South Wales.

Gaelle BROAD: I move:

That the petition be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Bus route 506

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO (Northern Metropolitan) presented a petition bearing 1151 signatures:

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the absence of Sunday services on bus route 506 between Moonee Ponds, Brunswick and Westgarth. Bus route 506 also finishes early on Saturday, with the last Saturday service leaving Moonee Ponds at 6.00 pm. Buses provide the only east-west public transport in Melbourne's inner north. Bus route 506 connects people to shops and services at Moonee Ponds, Sydney Road, Lygon Street and Westgarth. Local demographics are mixed, and housing density is increasing.

Bus route 506 once had a Sunday service, but this was cancelled in the 1970s or 1980s. Sunday trading has since become widespread and there is now high weekend traffic and parking congestion. However, the Sunday service on the 506 bus was not restored.

Usage of a restored Sunday service is likely to be high. A significant proportion of residents and visitors use public transport across the week. On an average boardings per hour basis, bus route 506 is Melbourne's busiest six-day bus route with its Saturday usage higher than all but a few seven-day routes. Analysis has shown that Saturday usage is a good indicator of potential Sunday ridership.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to restore Sunday services on bus route 506 and extend operating hours to at least 9.00 pm, seven days a week

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: I move:

That the petition be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Centre–O'Grady–Hallam South roads, Hallam

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) presented a petition bearing 428 signatures:

The issue:

We the signatories have increasing concerns for the safety to motorists and pedestrians at the intersection of Centre/O'Grady Roads and Hallam Sth Road, Hallam.

With the constant stream of traffic, motorists are at risk when merging into (or crossing traffic onto) Hallam Sth Road from O'Grady and Centre Roads. This is causing widespread concern for injury and accident with several near misses. In addition, the wait time can be up to 15 minutes for motorists to enter.

The action:

We request the construction of traffic lights, road widening and provision for pedestrians at this intersection as a matter of urgency.

That an interim traffic management measure be implemented pending construction.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: I move:

That the petition be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Firearms regulation

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) presented a petition bearing 76 signatures:

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the need to introduce and implement an online renewal system for firearm, private security individuals and business licences and registration to eliminate the reliance of the Licensing and Regulation Division (LRD) on paper-based renewals and payment notices. Accessible through Service Victoria or Victoria Police eServices, this online portal should allow current licensees, not new applicants, to submit renewal applications and pay for renewals online, similar to New South Wales using Service NSW.

It would enhance the transaction experience and reduce LRD's reliance on paper-based renewals by setting up automatic emailing of renewal invoices that would give applicants a number to enter on the portal to pay. This in turn would eliminate the need for mailed payment notices. It would also provide clear instructions of the renewal process as well as a more accessible system for those remotely working with no access to a bank or BPAY. This would give more options than the current two methods. You would be able to fill in the probity questions and upload any supporting evidence required in the form, as per the usual probity process. LRD would then be able to manually approve the application and email a photo notice, similar to NSW, once probity has been completed and payment has been done. The portal would provide more flexibility and easier access to LRD for licence holders and provide an easier workload on LRD staff, who have been working tirelessly since 2020 to try and clear the backlog of paper-based new and renewal applications. LRD staff could then better focus their resources to compliance enforcement and quicker processing. It would also save on printing costs and mailing of such documents.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to introduce and implement an online renewal portal for firearms licences and private security licences and renewals that would replace the current paper-based payment and mailed application renewal process.

David LIMBRICK: I move:

That the petition be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund

Joe McCracken (Western Victoria) presented a petition bearing 43,748 signatures:

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the dramatic rise in payments required by ratepayers under the proposed Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to immediately cease the introduction of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund, ensure the current Fire Services Property Levy remains in place for the foreseeable future and commit to a genuine consultation process, which includes CFA and SES volunteers, farmers, emergency service workers and other interested parties, to develop a fairer way of funding Victorian emergency services.

Joe McCracken: As this is a petition qualifying for debate under the standing orders, I give notice that I intend to move ‘That the petition be taken into consideration’ on Wednesday of next sitting week.

Committees

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Alert Digest No. 13

Sheena WATT (Northern Metropolitan) (13:18): Pursuant to section 35 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, I table *Alert Digest* No. 13 of 2025, including appendices and a minority report, from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. I move:

That the report be published.

Motion agreed to.

Sheena WATT: I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

In this latest *Alert Digest* No. 13 meeting of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee (SARC) we discussed the Statewide Treaty Bill 2025. I want to take a moment to talk to the chamber about this bill, which represents a landmark in Victoria’s ongoing journey towards justice and self-determination for First Peoples in this state. Building on the Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018 and the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Act 2022, this bill establishes the legislative foundation for a Statewide Treaty between the Victorian government and the First Peoples of Victoria.

At its core the bill creates Gellung Warl, a statutory body representing First Peoples in Victoria. Gellung Warl would be comprised of three interrelated arms: the First Peoples’ Assembly, which is the decision-making arm; Nginma Ngainga Wara, the accountability and monitoring arm; and Nyerna Yoorrook Telkuna, the truth-telling arm. Together they will enable self-determination and decision-making, provide advice to government and facilitate truth-telling and healing processes that acknowledge the historical and ongoing impacts of colonisation.

The bill’s framework ensures that Gellung Warl operates independently of ministerial direction while maintaining transparency and accountability through annual reports and parliamentary engagement. Importantly, it embeds a statement of treaty compatibility process requiring all future legislation to be assessed for consistency with the principles of self-determination, equality and respect for human rights. This mechanism places treaty considerations at the centre of lawmaking and governance. The legislation also provides for regular engagement between the First Peoples’ Assembly and government, including representation meetings with cabinet and annual engagement hearings on policy and expenditure matters affecting First Peoples. These processes are designed to institutionalise

respectful dialogue and ensure that the state remains accountable for its actions and commitments under treaty.

Beyond its structural reforms the bill signals a cultural and political shift. It recognises the unceded sovereignty of First Peoples and their enduring custodianship of country by legislating pathways for truth-telling, consultation and co-decision making. Victoria continues to lead the nation in building a genuine partnership with Aboriginal communities – one founded on truth, respect and shared responsibility for a just future. With that, I must confess that in my now five years in the Parliament this was the very best SARC meeting that I have ever attended. So it gives me great pride to wholeheartedly move that the Council take note of the report.

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (13:22): (*By leave*) I have 2 minutes. I will just make a couple of comments here. As a former Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee member, I understand the process to which the member has alluded and discussed. One of the problems with the Statewide Treaty Bill 2025 is that it has not been broadly discussed in the Victorian community. One of the problems with the treaty bill is that there has not been a proper, wide and open discussion, and that is one of the issues. We obviously saw the Voice referendum last year, which gave a very, very clear view from the Victorian community about this type of body, and the truth of the matter is this treaty is a sharper version of the Voice in many respects. The fact is that the Victorian community are the group that have not been properly consulted on this matter, and I think SARC could have done more to get that matter out there.

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:23): I must rise to also make a contribution on this report as a Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee member. I can say that I and Ms Watt and other members of the government SARC team participated in very extensive discussion and traversing of this bill. I just want to address what Mr Davis said in his contribution. It is not true to say that there has been no information out there about treaty. It is not true – absolutely untrue. This government has been working on treaty since 2015. We have also had the First Peoples' Assembly working on this bill with their communities, and consultation has been happening for many, many years on this bill. So it is offensive for Mr Davis to get up in this chamber and perpetuate such misinformation about this very important milestone. To hear Mr Davis refer to this as a yes vote just demonstrates the lack of understanding about what this actually is.

Jaclyn Symes interjected.

Sonja TERPSTRA: Well, that is right. I will take up the Treasurer's interjection. The Treasurer said you know exactly what you are doing, and you do, and that is what makes it all the more shameful that you should do this. It is an utter disgrace. Again I say clearly that what Mr Davis said was factually incorrect and untrue. There has been lots of discussion about this bill, there has been lots of consultation about this bill, and this government will not stand to hear the constant disinformation and talking down about this bill.

Treaty is important. Treaty will make very important steps towards the pathway of reconciliation and healing and, most importantly, for our First Nations people to have self-determination, which will improve their life outcomes in terms of health and education. It is an important bill, it is absolutely time and Victorians support it.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (13:25): I seek leave, if I may.

The PRESIDENT: Is leave granted?

Leave refused.

Gaelle BROAD (Northern Victoria) (13:26): I am pleased to speak briefly as a member of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. I do want to highlight that we did submit a minority report. This proposal is a significant change to our system of government in Victoria. I think there are a number of concerns that we have with the bill. There are greater FOI exemptions that are given,

higher than for ministers currently, and there are exemptions for land tax and exemptions for payroll tax. Questions can be asked of any member of Parliament. I think there are a lot of unknown costs with the election process, the remuneration and the infrastructure fund. When I looked at the bill, also the number of employees is unlimited to fulfil the work of the authority. I think it will have a big impact, and it is important for this Parliament to remember that we do govern for all Victorians.

Motion agreed to.

Legal and Social Issues Committee

Inquiry into Ambulance Victoria

Joe McCracken (Western Victoria) (13:27): Pursuant to standing order 23.22, I table a report into the inquiry into Ambulance Victoria, including appendices, extracts and proceedings, and a minority report from the Legal and Social Issues Committee, and I present the transcripts of evidence. I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

Joe McCracken: I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

Ambulance Victoria is in crisis. There is no other way to describe it. This report has a number of findings and recommendations to government to deal with the extensive and widespread dysfunction which permeates through the organisation. It is a toxic workplace culture characterised by nepotism, bullying, harassment and gaslighting; an environment where those who are in a clique get promoted; and an environment where those whistleblowers and others who raise legitimate workplace concerns are pressured, their workplace conditions made so difficult they are forced to resign or go out on WorkCover. Fear and intimidation are used as tools for power and control. This was evidenced by the fact that there were dozens of confidential and ‘name withheld’ submissions. Paramedics feel stressed and overburdened. Many have had to take extended leave due to extreme mental pain.

In the report the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission conducted, there were many, many recommendations. Few of them have actually been implemented; almost no progress has been made. The establishment of a workplace standards unit in Ambulance Victoria has also made little impact. We have seen witnesses – some senior executives from Ambulance Victoria – mislead the committee of inquiry. The committee made the decision to recall these witnesses, and the matter, I can confirm, has been referred to the Ombudsman. Leadership has been a revolving door of CEOs in recent years, with instability plaguing the organisation. The board lacks paramedicine experience, and a skills-based approach should be considered very carefully by the Minister for Ambulance Services. But in the end who actually suffers? It is patient outcomes.

Many targets are not being met. Ambulance ramping is resulting in serious clinical outcomes, sometimes even fatalities. Paramedics are doing their absolute best, and I pay tribute to and thank them. It is hard, gruelling work, and I thank every paramedic who turns up to work, serving others and ultimately saving lives. Their work should be respected, but paramedics are finding it difficult to access even basic workplace rights, such as appropriate information on their pay slips, let alone having pay periods match up with rosters. 000 call taking is not fully effective, being overly cautious, resulting in resources which could be more effectively used. This happens when there is no clinical oversight.

I want to thank the committee staff for their tireless work, and I acknowledge the constructive way my colleagues in the chamber who are members of the committee have worked. I thank them for that. If we are to see real reform, real change needs to occur. The ambulance system in Victoria is on life support, and it is patients and paramedics that are bearing the brunt of an organisation that does not appear to serve its purpose.

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (13:31): I rise as a member of the Legal and Social Issues Committee to make some remarks on this report into Ambulance Victoria. At the outset, I say that we know that many Victorians rely on the paramedics at Ambulance Victoria in times of their most acute and pressing need, and these paramedics are among the most dedicated and hardworking servants of the Victorian community. They deserve our support and respect for the work that they do. I think government members who participated in this inquiry want to very, very clearly state our support for the work that paramedics do every day. We do not want the critiques of the organisational practices and issues at Ambulance Victoria to in any way detract from or undermine our support for our paramedics.

The report does make it clear that there are, and have been, some very serious issues with the organisational culture at Ambulance Victoria. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission report from 2021 highlighted many of these. There are many efforts across the organisation trying to make good progress, and more work needs to be done. This report is not intended to cast a shadow on the good work of many but put a spotlight on the failings of a few. We do have a new chief executive officer, an important opportunity to refresh the organisation. We hope that this organisational change leads to more optimism about the future.

I just want to say one other thing. There was some worrying evidence that was given that had to be corrected in the course of the inquiry, and I just wanted to remark upon the fact that, as a matter of principle, we do as a Parliament and as the Council need to make sure that witnesses to our parliamentary committees give honest evidence. It was disappointing to see that evidence on a contentious issue from 2021 needed to be corrected, and we should take seriously any instances of knowingly false or misleading evidence being provided to a parliamentary committee.

Renee HEATH (Eastern Victoria) (13:33): The ambulance system in the state of Victoria is broken and it needs major reform. First of all, I want to start out by saying that individual paramedics are doing an incredible job, but they are working within a broken system: a culture of bullying, a culture where staff are underpaid, a culture where they are not able to juggle rostering to meet the demands of a modern life.

This was the first committee – I have been on many committees now – that I have ever been on where witnesses have misled the Parliament and had to be recalled to make corrections, and it was because of the most extraordinary reasons. I really just want to highlight that misleading a parliamentary committee is actually a serious offence. It is something that is extraordinary – it is a huge disrespect of democracy – and we do not have actually have a clear way of addressing that these days. Does Sally, the Usher of the Black Rod, take them down to the parliamentary prison and lock them up? No, you cannot do that these days. What actually does happen if you mislead a Parliament?

We also heard incredible evidence of cover-ups, and you can read about that in the report. I think it is absolutely worrying when there are two sets of standards, one for the general public and then one for the paramedics that have actually broken the law.

I want to thank the committee staff for all the incredible work that they do and thank our colleagues and incredible chair Mr Joe McCracken – hear, hear to him. I am looking forward to seeing some changes that are really needed in the days ahead.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO (Northern Metropolitan) (13:35): I would like to, as a member of the Legal and Social Issues Committee, offer a short contribution on this inquiry. I would firstly like to begin by thanking the secretariat and their whole team for the hard work that they have put into this inquiry – my thanks and appreciation to all of them. I would like to thank the chair for his work in leading this inquiry, and I also would like to thank everybody that has contributed to this inquiry, whether it was through submissions or appearing before the committee at hearings. It was not always easy to present their evidence to the committee due to their own experiences with Ambulance Victoria,

but I really appreciate the courage of so many members of the public as well as Ambulance Victoria in presenting their accounts and experiences with Ambulance Victoria.

I also would like to say that this report overall is an important avenue for the government to take on what we heard as a committee: that the system does need improvement and there is an opportunity to improve systems so that our Ambulance Victoria frontline workers can do the job that they are tasked to do, and that is to save lives and ensure that patients that are calling on their expertise and service are able to be cared for with integrity, compassion and empathy. The Victorian Greens support the work of Ambulance Victoria workers and appreciate their contributions as well to the overall inquiry.

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:37): I am also grateful for the opportunity to rise and share a few comments on what has been a very interesting inquiry, that of the Legal and Social Issues Committee into Ambulance Victoria. At the outset I do want to acknowledge all of the submitters and all of the people who came and appeared before the committee and gave evidence. In some cases it was a very trying, difficult thing for them to do, and I commend them for their fortitude in speaking to us in the open and compassionate way in which they did. I would also like to acknowledge all colleagues, including the chair. It was at times a good, robust discussion that we had, as it should be. I would also like to acknowledge the secretariat for their extensive work to support us throughout this process.

I would like to reiterate a comment made by Mr Batchelor at the outset of his contribution, that this is an inquiry that has looked at some very real issues – some issues that have been addressed and some issues that are being addressed at the moment – but none of the criticisms of this report should be read as in any way undermining or denigrating the hardworking paramedics or indeed those executive staff or other staff within the organisation who are doing their best to change that culture. It is important for us to acknowledge that where there are issues, and we have identified various issues in this report, steps are also being taken. I would not want this report to demoralise the work of those within the organisation who are trying to drive that change that we all very much want to see. This report comes in the wake of the far more extensive Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission review and provides some additional commentary on that. I also note the extensive rollout of several measures in this year's budget, which is also aimed at supporting our ambulance services. There is much more to say, and I look forward to saying that at a later date.

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:39): I also welcome the opportunity to speak on the Ambulance Victoria inquiry. I also want to thank the chair Mr McCracken, my colleagues and the whole parliamentary inquiry team for their efforts, because it was an extensive inquiry. It was a very, at times, enlightening and distressing inquiry, and I think you will see this in the actual report. There were a number of people that did not even feel comfortable to have their details in. They wanted to put in confidential reports or partially confidential reports because they did not feel safe in coming forward in this inquiry.

I think that the bravery and courage of everybody that made contributions needs to be acknowledged.

Also, as has been noted in this place, there were a number of senior people who gave testimony and their details had to be recalled. Those things are now under investigation with the Ombudsman. This is an incredibly important issue, which has been highlighted already in this chamber, and the issue shows us that we have a situation with an inquiry where there are genuine details of concern and that there are some that are still prepared to come in and to mislead us in an inquiry. I think we will see how that unfolds with the investigation.

But it is very clear that there are ongoing issues and have been major issues of bullying and intimidation in the workplace and that it is not consistent across the places – there were different testimonies across the whole of Victoria, so it really did depend on where people were coming from as to how extensive their experience was in particular situations. But I am very pleased that we have

been able to have such a thorough investigation and inquiry into these issues, and this report is definitely worth a read for every single parliamentarian.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (13:41): I rise to speak to the report tabled today and an important inquiry that the Parliament undertook, an inquiry that the Labor Party voted against. And I am pleased that we were able to, because it has highlighted a lot of issues. As the chair's foreword says, the governance failures run deep, and indeed that is the evidence that we heard through the numerous submissions and the witnesses that came before the inquiry. Can I say at the outset: I would like to also acknowledge the work of the secretariat, who put this together and assisted this thorough inquiry.

What was concerning throughout the inquiry was the number of submissions that were provided to the committee that showed a distrust of the executive of Ambulance Victoria and the toxic culture despite the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission report that was undertaken several years ago – and still the failure of Ambulance Victoria to undertake all those recommendations. One of those submissions that the committee got was in relation to the illegal gathering that occurred through COVID, and I think that goes to the issue around governance and around what was happening in this state at the time. With thanks to the witnesses, the submissions and also reporting in the media, that issue was exposed. Out of that issue, the misleading evidence that was provided to this committee cannot go unnoticed and needs to be addressed. Misleading the Parliament once you can forgive, but misleading the Parliament twice is gross misconduct, and disrespect of this institution is the reason that that has occurred. That is why there is the referral to the Ombudsman to inquire into this issue and the issues surrounding what was going on and what the government knew – and who from the government was represented at that illegal gathering also needs to be absolutely exposed. This inquiry exposed a lot of those flaws. *(Time expired)*

Motion agreed to.

Papers

Papers

Tabled by Clerk:

Audit Act 1994 – Revised Financial Audit of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office, year ended 30 June 2025, under section 81(4) of the Act.

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 – Order of 9 July 2025 giving approval to the granting of a lease at Albert Park.

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 –

Notice under section 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule No. 31 (*Gazette G37, 11 September 2025*).

Notice under section 32(4)(a)(iii) in relation to the Environment Protection Regulations 2021 (*Gazette G41, 9 October 2025*).

Inquiries Act 2014 – Report of the Board of Inquiry into the McCrae landslide, September 2025 (*Ordered to be published*) (*released on 9 October 2025 – a non-sitting day*).

Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986 – Minister's certificate of 12 September 2025 to not require the service of a notice of intention to acquire land, under section 7 of the Act.

Local Government Act 2020 – Commission of Inquiry into Whittlesea City Council (*Ordered to be published*).

Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission – Matter involving the Member for Western Victoria Region and the Member for Warrandyte District – Investigation report, September 2025 (*released on 23 September 2025 – a non-sitting day*).

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

Ballarat Planning Scheme – Amendments C240 and C252.

Bayside Planning Scheme – Amendment C192.

Boroondara Planning Scheme – Amendment C419.

- Casey Planning Scheme – Amendment C286.
Darebin Planning Scheme – Amendment C225.
Frankston Planning Scheme – Amendment C161.
Glen Eira Planning Scheme – Amendments C274 and C275.
Greater Geelong Planning Scheme – Amendment C481.
Horsham Planning Scheme – Amendment C89.
Hume Planning Scheme – Amendments C273, C274 and C280.
Hume, Knox, Melton and Wyndham Planning Schemes – Amendment GC261.
Latrobe and South Gippsland Planning Scheme – Amendment GC217.
Latrobe Planning Scheme – Amendment C149.
Melbourne Planning Scheme – Amendments C426 and C486.
Merri-bek Planning Scheme – Amendment C231.
Surf Coast Planning Scheme – Amendment C149.
Victoria Planning Provisions – Amendments VC288, VC289 and VC292.
Wyndham Planning Scheme – Amendment C281.
Yarra Planning Scheme – Amendment C317.
Yarriambiack Planning Scheme – Amendment C34.
- Road Safety Camera Commissioner – Report, 2024–25.
- Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament –
- Accident Towing Services Act 2007 – No. 97.
 - Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992 – No. 88.
 - Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996 – No. 92.
 - Confiscation Act 1997 – No. 90.
 - Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 – No. 95.
 - EastLink Project Act 2004 – No. 98.
 - Food Act 1984 – No. 96.
 - Improving Cancer Outcomes Act 2014 – No. 89.
 - Melbourne City Link Act 1995 – No. 99.
 - Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 – No. 103.
 - Road Management Act 2004 – No. 100.
 - Road Safety Act 1986 – Nos. 101 and 102.
 - Serious Offenders Act 2018 – No. 94.
 - Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 – No. 93.
 - Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007 – No. 91.
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 –
- Documents under section 15 in relation to –
 - Order under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 relating to the Psychological health compliance code.
 - Statutory Rule Nos. 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102 and 103.
 - Legislative instrument and related documents under section 16B in respect of a Notice to fix fees under section 73 of the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007.
- Victorian Electoral Commission – Report to Parliament on the 2024 local government elections, October 2025.
- Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019 – Guidelines No. 1/2025, effective 6 October 2025, under section 36 of the Act.

WorkSafe Victoria – Report of requests for the approval of persons or bodies by the Governor in Council, 2024–25, under section 10(2) of the Dangerous Goods Act 1985, section 11(2) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, and section 595(4) of the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013.

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

Bail Further Amendment Act 2025 – Whole Act, other than Division 2 of Part 2 – 30 September 2025 (*Gazette S518, 23 September 2025*).

Corrections Legislation Amendment Act 2025 – Remaining provisions – 11 September 2025 (*Gazette S488, 9 September 2025*).

Committees

Legal and Social Issues Committee

Inquiry into the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Regulation of Personal Adult Use of Cannabis) Bill 2023

The Clerk: I have received the following paper for presentation to the house pursuant to standing orders: the government response to the Legal and Social Issues Committee’s inquiry into the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Regulation of Personal Adult Use of Cannabis) Bill 2023.

Petitions

Responses

The Clerk: I have received the Minister for Outdoor Recreation’s response to a petition titled ‘Victorian Fisheries Authority workforce changes’, the Minister for Planning’s response to a petition titled ‘Reject the proposed Koyuga Nanneella wind farm’ and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety’s response to petitions titled ‘Safety improvements to the intersection of Main Street and Conness Street in Chiltern’ and ‘Safety work on Main and Conness streets in Chiltern’.

Production of documents

Housing affordability

The Clerk: I have received responses to five orders for the production of documents. Firstly, I table a letter from the Attorney-General, dated 10 October 2025, in response to a resolution of the Council on 13 August 2025 on the motion of Mr Puglielli relating to the property market review 2022. The government has searched for and identified the final report of the property market review sought by the order. A claim of executive privilege has been made over the one document in full.

Water policy

The Clerk: I table a further letter from the Attorney-General, dated 10 October 2025, in response to a resolution of the Council on 19 March 2025 on the motion of Dr Mansfield and further to the government’s initial response on 13 May 2025 relating to the water grid plan. The government has searched for and identified the water grid plan, now entitled the *Water Security Plan for Greater Melbourne, Geelong and Connected Towns*.

Waste and recycling management

The Clerk: I table a letter from the Attorney-General, dated 10 October 2025, in response to a resolution of the Council on 10 September 2025, on the motion of Mrs McArthur relating to the four-bin waste and recycling system. The letter states that the date for the production of documents does not allow sufficient time to respond and that the government will endeavour to provide a final response to the order as soon as possible.

Machete amnesty

The Clerk: I table another letter from the Attorney-General, dated 10 October 2025, in response to a resolution of the Council on 10 September 2025 on the motion of Mr Limbrick relating to machete safe disposal bins. The government has identified seven documents within the scope of the order. I further table the seven documents, together with a schedule of the identified documents.

Suburban Rail Loop

The Clerk: I table a final letter from the Attorney-General, dated 2 October 2025, in response to a resolution of the Council on 27 August 2025, on the motion of Mr Davis relating to Suburban Rail Loop costings. The letter states that the date for the production of documents does not allow for sufficient time to respond and that the government will endeavour to provide a final response to the order as soon as possible.

Business of the house**Notices**

Notices of motion given.

General business

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (14:03): I move, by leave:

That the following general business take precedence on Wednesday 15 October 2025:

- (1) notice of motion given this day by me on animal shelter obligations;
- (2) notice of motion given this day by Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell on the Australian and Victorian flags;
- (3) notice of motion given this day by David Davis on retail crime; and
- (4) order of the day 1, resumption of debate on the second reading of the Safer Protest with a Registration System and a Ban on Face Coverings Bill 2025.

Ann-Marie Hermans: On a point of order, President, I am just wanting to understand the motion that is being put forward. Is that changing the order of debates?

The PRESIDENT: It is setting the order of debate for tomorrow. If this motion is not put, we would have to adjourn every single motion that is in front of it.

Ann-Marie Hermans: But it is not affecting the petition debate?

The PRESIDENT: No, not at all.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements**North-Eastern Metropolitan Region schools**

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:05): I rise today to warmly welcome back all of our amazing school students across Victoria as term 4 gets underway. A special shout-out to our year 12 students: good luck as you prepare for your exams. You have got this, and we are all cheering you on. Over the break I had the pleasure of visiting Tinternvale Primary School, where I met the principal Joanne Wood. Joanne and her team are already hard at work, making sure every student has the support they need to thrive. Just before the break Tinternvale hosted their inquiry showcase, which was an incredible display of creativity and learning from their students. Let us not forget the excitement of the grades 3 and 4 park camps and the grades 5 and 6 city camps. These experiences are what make school life so special, and many students will benefit from the \$400 vouchers from the Allan Labor government's Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund. I also caught up with Chris Kent, the acting principal of Pembroke Primary School, to hear about the fantastic programs they are running, not just for students but for families too. They have been offering English language sessions to support our

wonderfully diverse Mooroolbark community – how good is that? I have to admit I am a little jealous that I actually missed their recent footy day where students proudly wore their team colours, enjoying a free sausage sizzle. A big thankyou to the parents, teachers and volunteers who made that day such a success. This is what makes our community so strong, with great public schools that go above and beyond, families who pitch in and a government that backs them every step of the way. The Allan Labor government will always invest in the infrastructure and programs that our public schools need, because every child deserves the best start in life.

Middle East conflict

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (14:06): On Sunday morning, members of the Jewish community in Caulfield came together to offer their thanks and show their support for the actions of the United States administration and President Trump. The strength of leadership, working with other Middle Eastern countries, which has led to the release and return of hostages and, sadly, some of the bodies that have not survived – following being kidnapped and taken hostage on that fateful day of 7 October, two years ago – was deemed by some to be an impossible task. Whilst the world looked on in horror as actions of a terrorist organisation unfolded on 7 October, like so many communities around the world, it was members of the Melbourne Jewish community who have shown determination and respect and have peacefully and continuously called to bring the hostages home now. My colleague David Southwick, who has worked tirelessly for his community during this period, spoke of the gratitude and called for an everlasting peace – something we all want. The overwhelming relief and emotion by those who attended on Sunday was evident. I am confident that the broader Victorian community is also relieved with this development and, as a consequence, want all Victorians to live in peace and harmony. Our wonderful state offers so much to all who call Victoria home. We do not want division, hate or actions that shatter our wonderful Australian spirit. Let us all acknowledge the work that has been done through strong leadership to secure the hostage release, which has ended the war, resulted in peace, and the efforts that will now allow the Jewish and Palestinian communities to heal and rebuild.

Electrify Your Life expo

Katherine COPSEY (Southern Metropolitan) (14:08): I want to give a shout-out to the amazing team at the City of Boroondara and especially Electrify Boroondara for their excellent Electrify Your Life expo that I attended over the weekend. It was so well attended by crowds from across the community this year, and I know that this event has gone from strength to strength each year that the council has hosted it, ably supported by the amazing community activists and community groups that go and present and share their knowledge about how we can bring down emissions by electrifying our home and transport choices. Over the weekend, there was just a huge array of information, very bespoke information, for everyone who was interested in just bringing down emissions at a household level and specialised advice for people in apartments. What I really noticed this year was a huge magnification of the amount of information available about electrifying transport choices. There was heaps of information on switching to an EV. There were e-bike demonstrations and test rides available, and I had a really great conversation with Bicycle Network, who were there, and also the Australian Electric Vehicle Association volunteers, who were so good at answering all of my questions. I also want to give a shout-out to Kew High School for their awesome barbecue, which was an electric barbecue that was powered off an EV that was in the parking lot at the expo. It was a really, really wonderful vibe on the weekend, with so much enthusiasm. The community was out in force. What I love about this event is that there are many people there who have completed their own home electrification journey and are now looking to share the lessons that they have got and the knowledge that they have gained with others, and there is definitely an appetite for getting off gas in Boroondara.

Metro Tunnel

Sheena WATT (Northern Metropolitan) (14:10): Christmas will come a little early this year, because in early December the Metro Tunnel will open to the public. You see, I am lucky enough that

four out of the five stations are in my electorate, and everywhere I go, the community are absolutely buzzing, because they know that in only a few short weeks, the most transformative piece of public transport infrastructure since the city loop will be up and running. Not only are these stations public transport hubs, they are works of art. The time, work and passion that goes into making these stations unique but still distinctly part of our state's DNA is an absolute tribute to everyone that worked on the design and construction of these temples of transport. It is more than just two side-by-side 9-kilometre tunnels. This project will transform the way that countless Victorians get around and will free up space for more services across other lines, including shortening commutes to work, uni and health care. I will see so many folks in December for the opening, and over summer I will be taking the time out from Arden to Anzac to enjoy the culmination of years of hard work and effort. Congratulations to all the team that helped make this happen.

Middle East conflict

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (14:11): It was with joy that I watched the television last night and saw the hostages come home. So many people have willed the return of the hostages, and I must say I pay tribute to those who have been involved in the negotiations. I thought the Trump contribution in the Knesset was extraordinary, singling out a series of people who have made an enormous contribution. Right across the whole world, including in our own area, including in Victoria, including in Southern Metro, Ms Crozier, people have worked and called for the return of the hostages. It is shocking that they were taken in the first place on 7 October – an act of barbarism, it can only be described as, coming over into the kibbutzim and into the music festival, killing 1250 people, taking 250 hostages. At least now the last 20 living hostages are home, and the bodies of some of the other hostages are coming. I am thankful for the work that has been done by so many, and in particular I pay tribute to the spirit and the strength of many people here in Victoria who have called again and again for the hostages to come home. In this chamber I put a motion on every week through that period because I wanted them home. They should have been brought home a long time – *(Time expired)*

Elmore Field Days

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL (Northern Victoria) (14:13): Last week I joined over 700 exhibitors at the Elmore Field Days. There I saw over 30,000 visitors checking out the stalls that offered all of what the Victorian agricultural community is interested in, from large-scale machinery to yours truly, the humble little state MP who represents the region. The three-day expo is run by the Elmore and District Machinery Field Days Incorporated and boasts over 500 volunteers who commit their time to seeing the field days being the success it is. The local community established the Elmore Field Days in 1964, and each year the proceeds from this not-for-profit organisation go back into the community, supporting local infrastructure, services and activities. My stall was overwhelmed by constituents and visitors to the region alike, where we were praised for our tireless efforts at Parliament, heard all of their complaints about other parties and answered plenty of questions in relation to state policy. I intend to book a site again next year to continue being a part of such a wonderful cause that not only helps the local community of Elmore but also attracts many visitors to the region.

Wodonga crime

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (14:14): Caught up in Melbourne's 24-hour news cycle, it is easy to think Victoria's crime crisis stops at the outskirts of Melbourne. But in Wodonga, crime jumped 34 per cent last year. That is no shock to the people who have had their home broken into, their car stolen or watched local shops hit by brazen thieves. It is also no shock to the man who lost his finger in a machete attack or to the doctors and nurses who were terrorised by kids as young as 10 after late-night shifts at Wodonga hospital.

One in five offenders last year were school-aged kids. There were 10 crimes a day, and nearly half remain unsolved. Recently an 18-year-old girl was released on bail after being in a stolen car doing 140 kilometres an hour in an 80-kilometre zone. Five days later a 16-year-old girl was dead, allegedly

because she was with this young woman at the wheel of another stolen car, driving on the wrong side of the Hume Freeway.

The Liberals have already put forward some serious and sensible solutions to Victoria's ever-expanding crime crisis. All have been rejected by the Labor government. Labor continues to ignore the suffering of Victorians, but the Liberals are willing to listen, and that is why we are holding a public community forum in Wodonga next week. Crime is not just a metropolitan problem, it is everyone in Victoria's problem, and it needs fixing. *(Time expired)*

Fijian Parliament visit

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (14:16): It was an honour to be invited to participate in a United Nations Development Programme event last week in Fiji as part of the longstanding partnership between the Victorian and Fijian Parliaments, and I particularly want to thank the President for the opportunity and Sally West for her support in making it all happen. John Pesutto from the other place, New Zealand MP Camilla Belich and I joined Fijian parliamentarians from across the political spectrum to share knowledge and ideas about bill analysis and committee processes. Not only did I learn so much about Fijian history and how their Parliament works, the opportunity to come together in the spirit of knowledge sharing meant we found that despite our very different contexts, we are grappling with some of the same challenges: how to hold governments to account and, crucially, how to make representative democracy work for the people, better engaging with and empowering civil society. Vinaka to everyone who was involved, particularly our Fijian hosts, who made us feel so welcome. I hope we continue to build on this really valuable partnership for many years to come.

Exercise Emu

Trung LUU (Western Metropolitan) (14:17): In the past week I had the opportunity to attend the army cadets annual activities, visiting the Exercise Emu 2025 VIP day at Puckapunyal military area, where I saw over 2000 young Victorians between the ages of 12½ and 18 years old participating in the exercise over a span of two weeks. The Australian Army cadets program continues to play a vital role in developing the character and leadership skills of young Australians. The structured training, combined with community engagement and adventure-based activities, allows cadets to acquire practical skills in leadership, teamwork and discipline. The program instils the values of service, respect and responsibility, qualities that not only strengthen individuals but also broaden communities. But to put it in simple terms, it gets kids off the streets and gives them a purpose: to become better people. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Australian Army cadets brigade's Colonel Paul McArthur and his team for the special invitation. I applaud the dedication of officers, instructors and volunteers who generously give up their time to mentor and guide these young Australians. Their commitments ensure that the spirit of service and citizenship remains strong in the next generation.

Economic policy

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:19): A lot of people will remember the 1980s; a lot of people will not. So I will spell some things out for the Victorians who were not around back in the 1980s. Up until the 1980s, if you wanted to build a company in Western Australia, you came to Melbourne for capital. If you wanted to finance your business in Queensland, you came to Melbourne for capital. If you wanted to expand your farms in New Zealand, you came to Melbourne. In the 1980s, though, that all changed. A Labor government in New South Wales courted businesses big and small and gave them incentives to come across to Sydney. New technologies such as EFTPOS and telebanking emerged, and the New South Wales government enabled businesses to innovate and in turn to have Sydney prosper. Meanwhile the Victorian Labor government squandered our historic advantage in Melbourne and let capital flee Victoria, and have set us back ever since. The Pyramid Building Society, the Tricontinental crash, the sale of our state bank and the giving away of the ASX to Sydney are all examples of this.

This is what the current Labor government is doing again: suffocating industry, innovation and productivity. Neglected and directionless, we are a state economically and industrially adrift. Businesses do not feel welcome in Victoria. Every single metric shows this. Under a Battin Liberal government, Melbourne and Victoria will regain its crown as the business and finance centre of Australia and return us back to national leadership.

Middle East conflict

Renee HEATH (Eastern Victoria) (14:20): Yesterday was really an incredible day for the world with the end of the Gaza–Israel war, and I just want to express my thankfulness for the moral courage shown by President Trump in brokering this deal. I join with I know millions around the world who really hope that this will be a lasting peace.

I want to speak particularly about one family today, and that is the family of Omri Miran. His story is one of incredible courage and selflessness. He was in his safe room with his family on 7 October when his next-door neighbour, a young boy, came and knocked on his door because a Hamas soldier was holding a gun to his head. He said that if Omri did not open the door he was going to get shot. Omri then got paraded to the next room, where another girl was murdered in front of him. He ended up taking the most amazing step: in order for them to live, he was taken hostage to Gaza. I met his dad a while ago. His dad was growing a huge beard, and I asked what it was about. He saw that his son Omri had not been given even a razor in Gaza, so he decided that he would grow his beard until his son came home. I was so moved that I just said, ‘May your beard not grow too much longer.’ He handed me this necklace as a reminder to pray every day. Yesterday that prayer was answered, and I am so thankful.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

Lee TARLAMIS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:22): I move:

That the consideration of notices of motion, government business, 278 to 1086, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Harriet Shing:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (14:22): I rise to speak to the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. We are debating it this week, although it was expected to have been debated before the break. During the break there was some more discussion with the government and the opposition, which I will go into a little bit later. I want to put on record the work of the government and their acknowledgement of the concerns raised by the opposition. I understand that they will be moving amendments to that effect, which reflect those concerns, and will be doing so in the course of the debate. That will mean better outcomes for the community of Albert Park. There are a number of people I would like to acknowledge and thank for that, but I will do so further into the debate, with an understanding of what this bill is all about.

The purpose of this bill, as has been said by others in the other chamber, is to reflect the modern needs of the Formula One and MotoGP events in Victoria, which are growing in stature around the world. With the crowds that are coming they are increasing in scale and complexity. To ensure that there is community safety, the amenities are protected in the period before, during and after the annual event.

Just a bit of history on the grand prix: the Australian Formula One Grand Prix was first held in Melbourne in 1996 after being hosted by Adelaide for I think around 10 years. It was the then Premier Jeff Kennett who secured the grand prix for Albert Park and embedded Melbourne's international reputation as a destination for major sporting events. Jeff Kennett was elected after years of the Cain–Kirner government, which left Victoria in a perilous economic state. At that time Victoria was drowning in billions of dollars in debt – and look where we are now: those billions seem so insignificant compared to the rising \$200 billion debt bill that current and future Victorian generations will be paying down.

Unemployment rose and business confidence plummeted prior to the election of the Kennett government, and Victoria was really on the brink. Many of you in this place were probably in school and were unaware of the dire situation that Victoria was facing at that time. Some of you – I am not even sure – may not have even been around.

Harriet Shing interjected.

Georgie CROZIER: Thank you, Ms Shing. But nevertheless some of us actually were in the workforce at that time and understand what was going on in Victoria during that period. It was dire – and they were long, dark years after the Cain–Kirner years – for Victoria's international reputation and our reputation as being a strong economy. Mr Welch just referred to it, actually, in his members statement, talking about the benefits and the wonderful state that we were and we are. What happened during those times was some significant decision-making. It was the good stewardship of the Kennett government that brought responsible financial and economic management back into Victoria. Jeff Kennett's leadership did that, and as part of that, it was secured, this international event. So when I look at where we were then and where we are now, it feels like *deja vu* with our current debt spiralling out of control.

Victoria is now the highest taxed state in the nation. Jobs are being lost. As we saw a few weeks ago, ANZ is shedding thousands of jobs. Businesses everywhere are saying the tax grab from Jacinta Allan and the government is killing confidence and making it so much harder to be competitive. Only yesterday – and this has also been referred to in debate today – there was an article around some figures. I think you can toy around the edges, but the sentiment is there. Victoria is in a very perilous situation. When business groups come out and talk about Victoria being in economic decline and increasingly becoming irrelevant to the national and international business communities, this is of concern. It was these same issues that Jeff Kennett and the Liberal government were facing in the 1990s around the perilous situation that we were in. The article of yesterday is saying that this is not working. Titled 'Jobs wake-up call', it says that the economy is in decay as taxpayers fund employment growth. The government sector is employing Victorians rather than the private sector. That is what Labor does not understand. They do not understand how economies actually work and what is going on. They just see jobs. Their focus is on government jobs. There is a role for government jobs – of course there is – but what we are seeing is cuts in government job areas as well that are really stifling improvements in the services that need to be delivered to all Victorians.

I am increasingly concerned that those opposite do not understand the situation that we are in. They do not acknowledge it or understand it. I am really not surprised given there is very little business acumen sitting on the front benches of government, either in this house or in the Assembly. In fact the Premier and the Treasurer both come out of political offices. That is about the extent of their expertise until they were elected to Parliament. That is not the way to understand these business groups who are raising the call around the situation in Victoria. They should be taking notice of that and not brushing it aside. It is truly concerning, the situation where Victoria is at.

It is in contrast to the then Premier Kennett's leadership, which brought that renewed vision and revitalised Victoria after those dark days of the Cain and Kirner years. Today we are reaping the benefits of that vision, of revitalising Victoria and bringing confidence and these events into the state. Today the Formula One Grand Prix at Albert Park remains a lasting legacy of the Kennett-era vision.

It was, as I said, Premier Jeff Kennett's leadership working with other significant leaders at the time, such as the late Ron Walker, who was then chairman of the Melbourne Major Events Company and a former Lord Mayor, that was instrumental in bringing the grand prix to Melbourne and fighting off challenges from international entities who also wanted it – Malaysia and China. We nabbed the race from Adelaide. Now what is happening is that the Premier over there is nabbing business from Victoria and taking it over to Adelaide, offering far more attractive taxation and business opportunities. I personally know people that have left this state to go and set up their business outside of Victoria. It is not a fiction, it is fact. It is happening.

Nevertheless, I digressed slightly, but I gave that background because the grand prix has a proud history in this state. Yes, there have been people that have been opposed to it – there were at the start, I acknowledge that, and we do understand the disruption to the local community during that period – but it is an exciting time for the state. In saying that, I have never been to the grand prix.

A member interjected.

Georgie CROZIER: No, I have never been.

Harriet Shing interjected.

Georgie CROZIER: I can hear it, and I love the buzz of it. I think it is the most beautiful setting around Albert Park Lake looking on to the city, and I think we are incredibly fortunate to have such a backdrop as our beautiful Melbourne city for this event. This year I understand that there was a record crowd of more than 465,000 people. They came from around the world, they came from around the country and they came from around the state to join in. I have to mention the local hero – that is, Mr Piastrì – whose family is in Brighton in my electorate, I understand. They must be very, very proud of their son and the extraordinary efforts he has made in this elite sport. Without doubt it is a very important event in Melbourne's sporting calendar, and it does generate significant economic activity for Victoria, including more than 1600 jobs in the construction, hospitality, tourism and transport industries during that important period.

To get to the nub of what this bill does and the key clauses, clause 22 extends the race period from seven to 21 days. This has been a contentious part, given it is taking the disruption of the local area and amenity from a week to three weeks. The government has cited safety concerns around that and vandalism and all sorts of things. My response is that you need to be putting in more security so the vandalism and graffiti and wrecking of equipment does not occur. It is sadly an issue that is running rife across our community with an increase in crime. They are low-level crimes, graffiti and vandalism, but nevertheless those low-level crimes, as we know, actually extend into more major crimes. Victoria is in the grip of this crime crisis where some of the crimes that are occurring are just absolutely horrific.

This has been contentious because of the issue around access. I am really pleased that through the opposition's dealings with the government and a commonsense and reasonable approach, the community will be allowed to have greater access than what the original bill or the non-amended bill, the bill we are debating today, was allowing. I understand that the government will be tabling the map that has been provided to the opposition, which outlines the exclusion areas but also highlights the access areas for community sport groups, for businesses and for residents and the community to be able to access during this three-week period, excluding the seven-day period, which has always been the way. That is obviously when the race is running and they are setting up, and clearly it would be very dangerous for people to be on that circuit when the race or the preliminary scheduling is being undertaken. I will have more questions about access and what that means.

I want to take up the community groups in this point, and I want to acknowledge the work of a number of them. The Albert Park Sports Clubs Association and the president, Hugo Armstrong, who I have spoken with at length, and I know he has spoken to my colleague Sam Groth on numerous occasions, has been a great advocate for the community and for those sporting groups. I want to just thank Hugo for the work that he has done on behalf of the sporting groups and the community to ensure that we

got a somewhat better outcome than what the bill in its original form was going to do. It is about having that ability for groups to utilise the sporting facilities. There are sailing groups, there are cricket teams, there are football teams, there are a whole range of other sporting facilities, such as rowing that occurs on the lake. It is a magnificent precinct in my electorate and it really does cater for a lot of people within that area, not only the Albert Park area but also Prahran. The golf course does not just cater for those in those areas. They get people from all over Victoria and Melbourne going to that range, and it provides a fabulous sporting amenity as well. I would urge all Victorians to get out and do as much sport as they can, whenever they can. I do want to place on record and thank those people that have reached out to me, spoken to me, met with me and discussed their concerns. They may not be entirely satisfied, but I am hoping that they will be somewhat understanding of the improvements made after the work of the opposition with the government over the break that we have just had.

Clause 15 addresses changes in the Australian Grand Prix Corporation's insignia and intellectual property. Basically that has not changed since 1995, so it is updating the list of protected logos and expressions to reflect changes over time. This is just a modernisation of what is required. I think there is absolutely no problem with any of that.

Clause 25 increases the payment from the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to Parks Victoria. I will come back to this in relation to other tenants and the changes that the opposition has been able to secure. But what this does is increases an annual payment to Parks Victoria from \$100,000 to \$200,000. This amount has not changed since 1994. It is not a huge amount to reflect probably what was required over the last 30-odd years, but nevertheless it is an improvement, and the bill will enable future payment increases through regulation.

Clause 26 of the bill, which is an important part of the bill, also enables the grand prix corporation to host non-motorsport events that are not Formula One events or motorsport events, with ministerial approval. This allows for things like exhibitions or concerts or other sporting activities that could benefit from using the grand prix corporation's resources without imposing an additional burden on the Victorian taxpayer, and I say anything that does not impose a further burden on the taxpayer is a good thing. So I commend the government for this initiative, because the taxpayer is already paying a huge amount in relation to a whole range of issues, notwithstanding the support, obviously, that they give to this event, but as I mentioned at the outset, the economic situation that we are in with the spiralling debt is going to actually put a further burden on Victorian businesses and families in the current period and in generations to follow.

The last thing I want to say around the main provisions of the bill is on clause 17, allowing the minister to make appointments of acting members and acting chairs of the board, rather than the Governor in Council, very uncontentious.

But can I say again, I did want to just explain a little bit more. I hope that the government will be moving those amendments so that it is very clear for the house and for those that are watching this debate that it has been through that advocacy from the opposition where we have been able to ensure that the government adopts some new protections.

I have mentioned those in relation to access, and I am hoping that this map that I have got, which I presume is what the government is going to table, will go into a bit more explanation. Also, there is the creation of a comprehensive annual compensation scheme for tenants affected by the extended race period. This applies to any tenants, any businesses or sporting tenants or anyone there, who is affected by the race period, who is involved and who has signed a lease post-1994 and up to 1 January of next year. So it is anyone who has currently been impacted, because the original bill only compensated those that were affected prior to the grand prix coming to Victoria. This is a catch-up to ensure that those tenants who are financially impacted are actually compensated. That was a very strong issue that was raised with the opposition, and it is one that we have taken to the government. I am glad that that is being acknowledged and will be addressed.

Again, those public access areas that I spoke about will give greater transparency and accountability for the public in relation to the access areas. They must be declared within one month of the annual declared area of the grand prix, when that is undertaken. The minister must have regard to operational requirements and safety considerations when declaring areas and race periods, of course. As I said, this map that highlights public access will be made available and tabled today as part of this debate so that we can get the transparency that the community rightfully expects. I think it will give certainty and clarity to many people who have had concerns. Again, I want to thank them for speaking with me and my colleagues and ensuring that we got further improvements to this bill, and I want to thank the government for taking on, in good faith, those concerns from the opposition so that we have got a better outcome for all concerned.

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (14:42): I rise to speak on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025, a bill which is important to protecting the future of two of Victoria's most cherished major events: the F1 grand prix, which takes place at Albert Park Reserve, located in my electorate of Southern Metropolitan Region; and of course the MotoGP, which takes place on Phillip Island. We know that the grand prix is not just a popular event enjoyed by people from all over the state but is also a significant driver of tourism that brings people to Victoria. This year for every \$1 which the government invested in the grand prix, the state saw more than \$3 worth of economic impact. It is not just a massive sporting event for Victoria but for the whole world. Furthermore, we know that the equivalent of 1631 full-time jobs were supported by the economic impact of the grand prix.

There are many factors that go towards making Melbourne the successful cosmopolitan, international city that it is today. It almost goes without saying that one of those factors is the major events that we put on. These contribute to making Melbourne an appealing tourist destination. If someone comes from overseas to spend any given month in Australia, the chances are that they will be at a major event of some kind happening right here in Melbourne during that month. After all, Melbourne is the sporting capital of Australia. It might be the Australian Open, the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, the Boxing Day test, the Melbourne Cup, the AFL Grand Final, the grand prix or something else, but the chances are when people are flying in for a sporting event in Australia, it is right here in Melbourne. It is such an important idea that there should always be something interesting going on whenever people are in the city. There is always something happening in Melbourne. It does not just contribute to attracting tourists, it also contributes to attracting business investment in our economy. Businesses know that in Melbourne there will always be something getting people out and about, always something bringing in tourists, always something to get people excited about, and that allows them to have far more certainty when they are making decisions to invest in Victoria. Whether it is the footy, the tennis or the grand prix, businesses can always expect a steady influx of tourists into Melbourne.

Of course these events are not just about bringing in tourists, they are also there to be enjoyed by Victorians and Melburnians themselves. It is something that we all take pride in and something that makes Melbourne such an attractive location for people to move to. It is one of the reasons, among many, that people who move here choose to stay here. Melbourne is consistently growing. We are now larger than Sydney, and by 2050 we are going to have the same population that London has today. We are a growing international hub, and that is in no small part because we remain the chosen destination for all the major sporting events throughout the year in Australia and the world.

To the substance of the bill, one of the most important amendments of legislation contained in the bill is the change to the maximum length of the official race period – that is, the period of time when the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) has exclusive access to Albert Park. In previous decades the existing seven-day period was more than sufficient time to build and dismantle the necessary infrastructure. However, in 2025, with the scale of the event so much bigger than it was nearly 30 years ago, the process of construction of the Australian Grand Prix is just on a far larger scale. The issue of safety is more apparent than it was all those years ago.

The bill seeks to increase the maximum race period to 21 days, allowing the AGPC to spend more time preparing for the race. The grand prix is a hugely popular event that has called Melbourne home since 1996, and it has grown rapidly. Ms Crozier made the comment before: ‘Where were you in 1996?’ I can tell you I was appointed as an organiser for the Transport Workers’ Union in that year, and one of my first jobs was working on the grand prix on the monitoring committee. I just want to shout out to all the unions through Trades Hall and their affiliates for all the work they do on the grand prix, because it is a huge event where you have got to do a lot of work in a short amount of time, and particularly for the Transport Workers’ Union, when everything that comes into the precinct comes in on wheels – from the racing vehicles that are coming in from the airport into the precinct and from the aviation fuel that the helicopters use for ferrying people around to all the food and all the infrastructure that is brought in on trucks. The union movement has played a very important role in making sure that everything that is done in that precinct is done safely and in a timely manner.

At the 2025 Australian Grand Prix there were over 465,000 attendees. That makes it the largest Australian Grand Prix ever, with the highest turnout from attendees across the world – nearly half a million attendees this year. We know this figure will continue to grow in the coming years. The first Australian Grand Prix in Albert Park back in 1996 had 150,000 attendees on that race day. We can see just how much that number has grown in just 30 years. Making public access to the park a priority, with several provisions guaranteeing local and community access to the park during the 21-day period, this bill introduces a mechanism which will allow the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to allow public access to the park when safe to do so during the race period. That means the community will still be able to access Albert Park while giving the AGPC management teams the proper timeframe to set up the grand prix in preparation for higher attendance numbers.

The bill sets out that this process will be done in consultation with and with the approval of the minister so that the minister and the government as a whole can ensure the best possible outcome for the community each year. The bill seeks to balance public access with public safety. With this bill, the local residents in my community of Southern Metro will have the assurances that they can continue to access Albert Park when it is safe and proper to do so, and the grand prix corporation can safely and steadily prepare and pack up the event with a longer timeframe. My local community under this legislation will continue to have access to Albert Park. This is important not just for local community groups and individuals but for local businesses who depend upon access to Albert Park as well.

Another important aspect of the bill is the provisions which have been created to allow the AGPC to hold non-sporting events. Through this measure the bill will allow the AGPC to create a more dynamic events calendar for the community, and it enables the corporation to then raise additional funds through these events, thereby reducing their dependence on government contributions. Raising revenues from these alternative streams means the government will not be obligated to provide as much supporting finance for the race each year, and the AGPC can be more dependent on its own income sources. This can help create more events happening in the local area and more economic activity to benefit local businesses. Of course the process for proposing and applying for these events is extensive, and under the legislation the minister will be required to judge them according to criteria that will include financial sustainability and the impact on Albert Park tenants.

By giving the minister direct oversight and authority to approve these extra events, it means that events will be overseen with close analysis before proceeding.

Victoria is this country’s major events capital, and through this \$350 million redevelopment of the racetrack we have secured the F1 here in Melbourne until 2037. This is great news, not just for us in this generation of F1 fans but for the next generation who will have the security of knowing that F1 will still be in Melbourne more than a decade from now. By helping the AGPC rely less on government support and contributions and more on their own revenue streams, through extra events and so forth, this bill is giving F1 fans the opportunity to experience more events throughout the year and giving the grand prix corporation the financial security to keep events going for many years to come.

For such a large-scale development, especially when it comes to taking place at such an important location as Albert Park reserve, consultation with the local community is always important. The consultation process closed recently on this project. In this process members of the community were invited to send their responses and feedback on the project. This gives the government information about how different types of people use the park in different ways. We need to hear from businesses located in the park, workers, visitors, sports clubs and those who use the parks and any sporting facilities, residents who live near the park, dog walkers and anybody else who might use the park. We can use this information to work with the AGPC as well as the council to ensure minimal disruption to public access and that we can work around and protect what members of the community value most.

We in this state have shown for nearly three decades that the F1 and the amenities of the park can coexist peacefully. The F1 and the work of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation have brought strong economic investment and activity to my community in Southern Metro over the past three decades, and under this bill that will continue. It will bring more investment and opportunities for businesses and open up opportunities for more F1 and sporting related events at Albert Park.

No matter what time of year it is, there is always something going on in Melbourne. It is because of deliberate investment by the Victorian government over many decades into the cultural and social life of this state, bringing the Australian Open, the grand prix and many other global events to Melbourne, and we should be proud of that work. This bill is an effort to make sure that we keep this up. It helps us make sure the grand prix can continue to thrive in Melbourne, with more events and with a larger window to prepare for the annual race.

The bill also, importantly, helps ensure that we can keep access to Albert Park safe and open for the community as much as possible while allowing the AGPC to safely set up the race each year. These reforms address a serious public safety concern associated with the large influx of attendees at the Australian Grand Prix. We were of course overjoyed to see the record number of attendees at the 2025 grand prix, which amounted to nearly half a million people. But as I have already set out, it is becoming increasingly logistically challenging to prepare the course within one week of the F1. With the number growing ever since it came here nearly 30 years ago, it only makes sense that the AGPC has to scale up its operations. But that also means that we need to give them the flexibility and the space to properly set up for the event so that all attendees, staff, drivers and everyone can stay safe at the grand prix. While not having quick access back to Albert Park may not be a point of contention for some in this community, it is important to note that this is done for the safety of the public.

What is more, it is also for the safety of the workers. With nearly half a million attendees, more foot and road traffic means more complex management strategies, both in the lead-up to the grand prix and during the event. To meet that challenge, it only makes sense that we give the AGPC more time and flexibility to prepare and manage. Once it is safe to return to the park, where the course was, the public will be allowed back in. It is being done in a transparent, timely and cooperative manner to ensure that the event can go ahead as expected and the community can be kept safe as well.

This bill also provides for the continued operation of most venues and businesses within the impacted area within Albert Park. Take, for example, the Lakeside Stadium, the Albert Park driving range and the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre. They are all likely to remain at least partially open while some alternative access arrangements are in place during this extended two-week period. Moreover, members of the general public will continue to have access to numerous sporting clubs and venues which will not be affected by the extended race period. This means minimal impact on local businesses and sporting groups, who can continue to thrive and provide for the local community. That way we can give businesses the confidence that they can continue to keep their doors open and that the local community can continue to enjoy the facilities they need.

As I set out already, the Australian Grand Prix is one of the most important sporting events in the year, not just for Victoria but for Australia. The economic, social and cultural benefits the grand prix has brought to Melbourne over the years are quite significant. I have already mentioned the \$3 of economic

activity for every \$1 invested in the event, but that is before we mention the positive benefits of tourism. People from all around the world converge in southern metro to see Albert Park Circuit, filling up the hotels, the restaurants and the bars. International investments in Melbourne are a good thing for Victorians as a whole. The importance of the grand prix sits in the minds of not just Australians but F1 enthusiasts around the world. It is an extraordinary privilege to host the F1 here in Melbourne, and I am proud that it is right here in the heart of my community in Southern Metro. It brings a vibrant community together, helping businesses all around Albert Park and Melbourne as a whole, and it brings with it tourists from across the globe.

This bill gives the AGPC the flexibility to continue to safely prepare for and manage the grand prix for the safety of the workers and the general public who use Albert Park regularly. We hope to see the grand prix continue to grow in popularity and attendance as the years go on. It is a big event for Southern Metro and for Victoria that continues to provide strong economic and cultural benefits for the state. I share the excitement of many Victorians excited for the next race in the 2026 Australian Grand Prix. I am even more pleased to see the Allan Labor government is taking the right steps to ensure the safe and continued orderly management of the grand prix at the Albert Park by the AGPC in my community of Southern Metro. I commend the bill to the house.

Katherine COPSEY (Southern Metropolitan) (14:57): I rise on behalf of the Victorian Greens to speak in opposition to the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. It was a moment of brief hope when we saw that the government last sitting week before the break had failed to so far secure support to bring this bill on for debate. It is with great disappointment but not much surprise that I rise today, realising that the Liberals have rolled over and once again we are going to see Labor and Liberals team up to put big corporate interests ahead of those of the local community – disappointing but not surprising. We see it so often, and we have been seeing it in the community in the inner south, which gets taken over by the grand prix every year. We have continued to see both major parties put those corporate interests ahead of the local community time and time again.

For those sitting on the government benches, I think you should take heed that Ms Crozier was pointing out that you are continuing the great legacy of Jeff Kennett in locking the people out of Albert Park for years and years to come. We are seeing late breaking developments in terms of amendments being cooked up between the government and the opposition, once again the two old parties just putting corporate interests ahead of the local community.

This bill does three big things that everyone in Victoria who loves Albert Park and who uses it as a public place and understands the value of public land – land to exercise in, walk in, socialise in and simply enjoy for its green space – should be worried about. Firstly, this bill, as has been canvassed, triples the maximum race period from seven to 21 days, meaning a much longer period where the community are locked out of their and our public park. Second, it centralises control with the Australian Grand Prix Corporation by letting it declare which parts of the park the public may access during that longer lockout. Third, it broadens the corporation's ability so that it can run minister-approved non-motorsport events anywhere in Victoria but also more events within Albert Park outside of that 21-day grand prix race period.

The bill obviously raises human rights and charter issues. The government's own statement of compatibility acknowledges that the bill limits the charter right to freedom of movement. For up to 21 days each year now residents will be barred from a Crown land park that is reserved for public recreation. Labor say that by locking up the park for three weeks they are enhancing community safety, which seems to be their justification for all sorts of things these days. They have provided, though, very little evidence in support of this notion. I note that the Liberals were very concerned about this a few weeks ago, and I wonder if they have been able to secure any evidence from the government. Certainly the Greens asked the minister's office for further details on safety issues, and what we were sent through was unconvincing and certainly did not justify an additional lockout period keeping people out of the park and stopping people from traversing what is a really well used commuting and recreational area.

In fact we have heard from local park users that the proposed lockdown period and the extension of the grand prix's infrastructure and reduction of public access to the shared paths within the reserve can create their own safety issues, as people who, for example, jog, walk or cycle through the park making use of those safe pathways and shared pathways are now going to be forced onto busy roads. Sports club association president Hugo Armstrong, who I note is in the gallery today – thank you for joining us – has written to me and advised that no evidence has been made public about the reasons for the alleged necessity of the bill. The government has been unable to identify any specific instances of members of the public being injured as a result of the installation or the bump-out of the GP infrastructure. So I call bunkum on the government's supposed justification for this. This is a land grab, pure and simple. It is a deal for your mates at the grand prix corporation that is going to lock our community out of this park, and we are not convinced by your weasel words around safety. You are just doing the grand prix corporation's bidding today.

Other cities that host the F1 seem to have no problem holding their corporations accountable to run events safely in a short number of days. In his speech in the other place, the then shadow minister for major events Mr Groth convincingly outlined what occurred just last year in Las Vegas, where the race shuts down the centre of the city, the famed Las Vegas strip, for a few days. F1 seems to be able to set up and pack down safely in that city and in other major cities around the world, so why do we get such short shrift here in Melbourne?

The safety that the government does seem fixated on is actually safeguarding the opportunity for Liberty Media to continue to make obscene profits, while the Victorian government hands over eye-wateringly large sums, nearly half a billion dollars this year given the \$350 million gift to upgrade the pit buildings. And it continues to be the government, or rather Victorian taxpayers, who bear the financial risk here. We pay at least \$100 million annually in public funds to cover the shortfall of running this event. Liberty Media Corporation, which owns the F1, last year made billions – yes, billions of dollars – in profits, yet here we are in a debt-trapped state handing over nearly half a billion dollars in subsidies to a private corporation.

Save Albert Park, an amazing community group which has been advocating for decades since the Kennett era to protect this park, points out that the decision to give \$350 million to construct a permanent pit building and corporate facility extension in Albert Park reserve was announced at the same time that this government tried desperately to hide its funding cut of \$2.4 billion from Victorian state schools – an absolutely glaring illustration of this government's priorities. For years Victoria's Auditor-General and reputable economists, including Professor John Quiggin, have found that the grand prix, even accounting for tourists, does not deliver an economic benefit. And we will hear the same lines trotted out by the minister, I am sure, but the same government refuses to release detailed information around attendance figures or analysis to back their claims up. I know that for many years Save Albert Park have been trying desperately to get more information on attendance figures, but the government fights them at every turn.

The public consultation for this bill should certainly be in the running for this year's Clayton's consultation award. There was just a two-week period provided for community feedback. Even local stakeholders that have had good relationships around the staging of this event in the past, such as the City of Port Phillip, have called out how rushed the consultation period was in their submissions. Other community groups, such as Save Albert Park and the Albert Park Sports Clubs Association, are similarly critical of the lack of opportunity for discussion and proper public participation in this huge decision to lock the public out of one of Melbourne's largest parks.

The Greens have three amendments to this bill in my name, and I ask that those be circulated now.

At a high level these amendments achieve three things. Our first amendment seeks to retain the existing lockdown at seven days, not the proposed 21 days in the bill. I understand it was big words from the Liberals around whether or not they would actually stand on the side of the community in opposing the extension of the lockdown period, but the Greens have always proposed to bring this amendment

forward, and I will do so today. Let us be clear about the change on the ground that the bill seeks: the 21-day race period is three times the current maximum exclusion that has been operating and has been sufficient for the past three decades. That is why communities are outraged at this extended land grab. We understand that there are going to be house amendments circulated which may tinker with this provision. What we have been able to glean is that there will be access protected through designated zones. The amendments that we understand the government will be moving outline more powers for the corporation and more powers for the minister. But let us be clear, they will still allow the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to vary access as it sees fit. These amendments provide no certainty for the community and no security of access to the park during that time. The tenor is: trust us. But honestly, given Labor continually sells out park users, that trust has been well and truly eroded over the years. You can tinker around with this, but the government is still proposing to extend the race period lockout and bar the community for three weeks from this park. So our first amendment seeks to retain the existing one-week exclusion, which is bad enough.

Sports clubs that keep the precinct alive year round are already at the end of their tether. Rowing and sailing programs are losing water time at the peak of their seasons. School, sport and community competitions are displaced, and in even an ordinary year closures, truck movements and traffic management do restrict park use and limit public access. And let us be honest, this impact goes on for far beyond the lockout period: up to four months either side of the race weekend is not uncommon. So during the committee stage I will certainly be seeking clarification from the minister on whether this extended lockout period that they are proposing is going to be part of or in addition to the usual reduced access that sporting clubs and other park users are suffering while the grand prix goes about its business.

The community, sports clubs and residents are also very worried about the cumulative environmental impacts. Redevelopment around the new pit building has already involved trees being chopped down, with more being marked for the chainsaw as works proceed. Our parks are not staging pads waiting to store equipment and machinery for a multinational; they are our urban lungs, and they are community space. As we look towards 2050 and we see the greater density that is going to occur across Melbourne, this highlights even more strongly that green and treed space is needed and valuable and will become even more necessary, especially in a built-up area like the inner south. Activities that require and accelerate tree loss and hard surface expansion in Albert Park should be resisted for the generations currently using it and the generations that are to come.

The bill also allows the corporation to run events inside the park outside this 21-day period, even if they are non-motorsports events and even if they need to be minister approved. The stated policy intent here is ‘diversifying revenue and reducing reliance on government funding’, which would certainly be welcome, but I doubt that it is going to eventuate. The obvious policy route to reduce reliance on government funding is to limit or stop the subsidies that the government already gifts to this giant corporation. If a commercial event cannot break even, it should not be happening – certainly not taking over our public space. But I make the point that this shift will create yet more incentives to continue to monetise public land, and the bill creates no mechanism to match this increase in corporatisation of the land with any kind of community oversight mechanism – no binding access plan, no independent monitoring of noise, traffic or ecological impacts tied to these additional events. It looks like a blank cheque to me, and I am very worried about the additional impact that this is going to impose on the community. Labor, if you extend corporate powers, you should be expanding oversight and community power as well. Shame on you for not doing that and on the opposition for rolling over so easily on this bill and selling out the community.

The second amendment the Greens have prepared seeks greater transparency in relation to board appointments, with any appointment of the chair or board members of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation requiring (1) public notification via the *Government Gazette* that a position is vacant and (2) a cooling-off period of two years before a person can seek appointment if they have served as a minister, cabinet secretary, parliamentary secretary or ministerial officer recently.

We want to end the shameless merry-go-round of people who have served as ministers and then get appointed to the board, either as members or chair, which does nothing to remedy the feeling in the community that big corporate interests are easily finding the ear of the government of the day and that environmental and sporting groups as well as the general community are getting overlooked in favour of those big corporate interests. Our amendment is simple, and it does not require a wholesale change in the recruitment process, just that it is made public that there is a vacancy and the imposing of this cooling-off period for former ministers, cabinet secretaries, parliamentary secretaries or ministerial officers. One would think, or hope, that this sort of oversight would be an easy thing to implement and not bar people from seeking positions but help to increase the sense of transparency and the sense in the community that the appointees to this board are acting in their interests and that the government of the day is not looking to advance corporate interests over those of the community.

Our third amendment increases the payment to the committee of management, Parks Victoria, to \$500,000 rather than the \$200,000 proposed in the bill. The bill has, in a welcome step, doubled the Australian Grand Prix Corporation's annual payment to Parks Victoria, which was set at \$100,000. As has been noted, it was set in 1994 and has not changed for 30 years and is clearly completely obsolete and nowhere near what is necessary to contribute to the needs of the committee of management today. Two hundred thousand dollars, though, is an insulting token in the context of a really heavily subsidised event and substantial public works that are already green-lit to benefit the grand prix corporation within the park precinct. Given the scale, half a million dollars, being invested in the grand prix, a flat \$200,000 contribution basically is a rounding error and is grossly disproportionate in terms of actual park usage. Only 5 per cent of visits to the park are for grand prix attendance. Ninety-five per cent of visits to this park across the year are not for the grand prix. They are by people for walking, running, swimming, playing sport, socialising and using the green space to improve their physical, mental and spiritual health. Our amendment is proposing \$500,000, but we acknowledge that this is also probably very much at the low end of what is actually needed. If this place and this government were serious about fairness, they should be tying the payment much more closely to the actual costs and impacts borne by Parks Vic and the tenants with a ring-fenced community fund for grassroots sport, biodiversity and path upgrades. Our amendment would be a good step towards that.

As I mentioned earlier, we have not had access to the government's house amendments for long, but I will make just a few comments on those. We have heard from some stakeholders that, based on discussion between the government and the opposition, there may be some access to the aquatic precinct near Albert Road during this three-week shut-out period, but none of the access agreements are in the bill itself. We are left speculating as to what those will be and who will be able to contribute to the setting of those. As far as we understand, these amendments that the government is putting forward have not been discussed or negotiated with a number of stakeholders and users of the park who have spoken to us in terms of how the amendments will impact them or how to ameliorate any impact. In terms of the compensation that the government might be considering, I will make the same point: Albert Park tenants we have heard from have not been involved to date with these discussions or negotiations. The current compensation is based on a really limited and outdated legislative provision, as I have said, and a number of confidential direct arrangements between the AGPC and tenants. A clearer and more comprehensive legislative mechanism is obviously needed to remove much of the uncertainty and the ongoing losses that park tenants currently face. Whether these new arrangements are going to go closer towards fairness or match those losses will only be known once the legislation is put into place and its mechanisms are clarified. We do not have that information before us today to understand if they are going to be effective or not. The Australian Grand Prix Corporation still appears to have the power to vary access arrangements as it sees fit, even with these government amendments.

We see that the bill continues to not offer security of access to park users, even with these amendments. This bill and the Labor government continue as well to ignore the broader issues around the massive

imbalance and the rivers of government money being spent on the grand prix versus the trickle of money for anything else, and the many other very worthy users of the Albert Park reserve.

We all want Melbourne to thrive as a major events capital, but responsibly run major events respect their neighbours. The government's own messaging on this says that the race is locked in until 2037 and that it attracts huge crowds. But if that is the case, why, oh why, do the community continue to get so short-changed? We needed binding access windows, transparent cost-sharing and co-governance that included council and the park users, not these discretionary public access areas that can be redrawn and revoked by the promoter and the government of the day. Even supporters of the race can see that that is a problem. A longer race period lockout might make logistics simpler for the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, but once again it offloads risk, inconvenience, lack of access and lack of amenity onto residents, clubs and schools who share this park all year. It is not unreasonable to ask that before you triple the lockout, you hardwire in protections that the community could have enforced, not rely on good intentions. This is public land. It is a public park. It is not just an opportunity to erect private fences, and the community's rights do not evaporate each time the grand prix roars into town. It would have been nice to see Labor and the opposition do more to protect those rights. The Greens will be opposing this bill.

Sheena WATT (Northern Metropolitan) (15:17): Thank you very much for the opportunity to rise and make a contribution in support of the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025. Calling Victoria the home of big events is a bit of an understatement, I think. We have hosted some of the biggest and best attractions, not only in the country, but arguably in the whole wide world. Victoria does it better and bigger than anyone else. From the Australian Open to the AFL Grand Final, from the Boxing Day test to the NFL coming to Melbourne in 2026, our state has more than earned its reputation as Australia's sporting capital. These events are part of who we are as Victorians. They bring people together, they drive tourism, they fill our restaurants and hotels and they remind the world why Melbourne and Victoria are such special places to live and visit.

An absolute staple of our major events calendar is the F1 grand prix, and for nearly 30 years the grand prix has been a crown jewel for Victoria's tourism sector. Thanks to the Allan Labor government, it will remain here until at least 2037. The grand prix is not just for motorsports fans, it is for every Victorian whose job, business or community benefits from the flow-on of a thriving visitor economy. The numbers speak for themselves when it comes to the benefits that the F1 brings to our state. Attendance has grown from just over 300,000 in 2014 to a record attendance of more than 465,000 this year. The grand prix created over 1600 jobs in 2025 and brought in over \$300 million to our state's gross state product. The race is not just watched in Victoria either. It is broadcast into key tourism markets like China, India and Japan, reaching over 78 million viewers worldwide. You see, that is tens of millions of people seeing Melbourne, seeing our skyline, our culture and our parks, and planning, I hope, for their next trip here. I would also like to add that some of those watching are from interstate, like my most beloved uncle.

The Australian Grands Prix Act 1994 has been the legislative foundation for this event for three decades. It established the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, or the AGPC, which is responsible for staging the Formula One Grand Prix at Albert Park and the MotoGP at Phillip Island. But as with any piece of legislation that has been on the books for that long, it needs updating to reflect the scale and complexity of the event today.

This bill updates the act to ensure the grand prix can continue to deliver safely, efficiently and in a way that balances the operation of the event with the needs of the local community.

For me, I have got to say that when the first bill passed in 1994, it was not long after I had actually stopped living in St Kilda. It was then a smaller event with fewer moving parts. Today, however, it is the largest temporary street circuit in the world, with more infrastructure, more vehicles and more workers involved in setting up and dismantling the track than ever before. Under the current act the race period can be declared for no more than seven days. Thirty years ago that was fine, but today it

simply is not enough time to safely build and dismantle an event of this scale. Compressing all that work into a single week puts unnecessary pressure on the workers and increases the risk for pedestrians and cyclists who continue to use parts of the park during the set-up and the pack down. That is why one of the main aspects of this bill is the extension of the maximum race period for up to 21 days, and that additional time is not about extending disruption, it is about making the event safer and better managed. I have taken the time to in fact meet with a series of workers that will benefit from the proposals that are contained in the bill.

I know that Albert Park is one of Melbourne's most loved public spaces. It is used by more than 7 million people each year, whether it is for rowing, walking, cycling, golf or recreation, and this bill recognises that. In the weeks before and after the race hundreds of heavy vehicles and forklifts move through Albert Park, transporting concrete barriers, steel structures and large pieces of equipment, often while cyclists, runners and dog walkers are still using the same road, can I just say. This bill has gone to WorkSafe for their consideration, and they support the 21-day race period in the bill, recognising that having more than just one week will mean higher safety standards.

The bill creates a clear framework for the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to keep as much of the park open as possible during the race period for as long as it is safe to do so. The corporation will also have to be transparent about its decisions. It must publish all access determinations in the *Victoria Government Gazette* and on its website after consultation with the minister, which allows for oversight over decision-making and gives the public proper awareness of decisions made by the AGPC. The bill allows the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to temporarily close a public access area for up to three days if it determines that doing so is necessary in an emergency or for public safety reasons. If a longer closure is required, the corporation will be required to either reopen the area after three days or formally vary or revoke the public access declaration through the proper processes.

The bill also strengthens support for Parks Victoria, which manages Albert Park. The annual payment from the grand prix corporation will double from \$100,000 to \$200,000 – and can be increased further through regulation, might I add. That reflects the significant work Parks Victoria does, such as managing tenants, maintaining infrastructure, overseeing repairs and ensuring that the park remains in good condition after the event. This increase essentially brings the figure in line with inflation since the 1990s and recognises the critical work that Parks Victoria does year round to keep the park in a safe and great condition. So thank you so very much to the team at Parks Victoria. It is recognition that hosting an international event of this size has an impact on the park's environment and on the park's facilities and that Parks Victoria deserves the resources to meet those responsibilities.

Another key reform in the bill allows the grand prix corporation to host non-motorsport events, subject to ministerial approval. These could include concerts, cultural festivals or community activities that use the same infrastructure and expertise the corporation already has. Any proposal must be submitted at least six months in advance and include full operational, security and safety information. The minister must consider factors like the event's financial sustainability, its impact on Parks Victoria and park tenants and the level of community consultation undertaken. The change gives the corporation flexibility to generate new revenue and make better use of its resources, reducing reliance on government funding while creating more opportunities for Victorian workers and suppliers.

The bill also makes a few small but sensible governance changes. It allows the minister rather than the Governor in Council to appoint acting members and an acting chairperson of the corporation's board. This allows for greater continuity and less disruption if there is a vacancy, or indeed an unexpected absence, may I say. It also updates the definition of the 'grand prix insignia' to better reflect modern branding and some of the promotional practices that are at play right now, ensuring that our laws protect the current event's identity, not just the version of 30 years ago.

I am going to finish with a little fun fact if I may. I know that I have time left on the clock, but I will let you know that in the time it has taken for me to make my contribution, the pride of Melbourne, Mr Oscar Piastrì, would have done 12 laps of the track. I will leave that one with you for some

thinking. That is quite an extraordinary feat. Can I just wish Mr Piastrì all the best for the rest of the season.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Michael Galea): An interesting fact to ponder.

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (15:26): I rise to speak on the Australian Grands Prix Amendments Bill 2025, and in doing so I believe that our party will not be opposing this bill. It is something that pleases me, because I am a very strong supporter of the Australian Grand Prix.

The bill will amend the Grands Prix Act 1994 to extend the duration of the race period from seven days to 21 days. It will allow the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to host non-motor sport events, which is a little bit exciting to see – to think about what else we might be able to do around the grand prix. It will broaden the powers to declare public access areas and also vary or close off public access areas by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation with ministerial approval. It will increase the Australian Grand Prix Corporation's financial contribution to Parks Victoria from \$100,000 to \$200,000, and it will allow these contributions to be increased through regulations. It will also update the definition of the 'grand prix insignia' and transfer power from the Governor in Council to the minister to make acting appointments to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation board.

Personally, I have always been a huge fan of the grand prix. My father was actually friendly with Stirling Moss, so our family has been a grand prix enthusiastic family for many, many years. I remember when my sister got married in 1988 that the grand prix used to be on the second Sunday of November. My sister got married on the second Sunday of November in 1988. In her wedding video as we were getting ready at the house— everyone was doing make-up and hair and starting to have photography and everything – you can see and hear all the way through this video my sister and I just saying, 'What's happening with the grand prix? Who's winning now? Who's in front?' We were more concentrated on the grand prix than we were on the wedding at that point in time. Through Dad's association with Stirling Moss, I have also had the great pleasure of being involved in the grand prix on race day, going around the track in an open-air Aston Martin, with Stirling driving that car on the track with all of the crowds there that day. I have also had the pleasure of having a ride in the two-seater car twice: once around the grand prix track on grand prix day, and once up and down High Street in Shepparton, when the grand prix corporation came to Shepparton to promote the grand prix.

Shepparton also has a very special connection with the grand prix at the moment, because we very proudly claim Oscar Piastrì as one of our own. Oscar's parents Nicole and Chris both grew up in Shepparton, and Oscar's grandparents, Kathy and Del Piastrì and Hugh and Robyn MacFadyen, are very well known and very well loved members of our community. We embrace Oscar as our own, and I look forward most Sunday nights to sitting up at all sorts of silly hours of the morning watching Oscar and cheering him on. I have to say I agree that he is getting a very hard time at the moment. McLaren should realise just how lucky they are to have Oscar Piastrì driving with them. They should get behind him and promote him as their number one driver rather than the other driver they have, who tends to do a lot of whingeing rather than winning.

The opposition will not be opposing this bill. The Formula One Australian Grand Prix is an incredible, world-class event that brings visitors from all over the world to our city here in Melbourne. We could not buy the publicity we get internationally. Much like the tennis, the amount of people who watch the Australian Open tennis or the Australian grand prix on TV, whether that be in America or whether that be throughout Europe or in any other country in the world – that sort of publicity is absolutely amazing for our city and our state, and we need to keep some of those really iconic events here in Melbourne so that we can keep getting that international exposure. The numbers have grown every year, and 2025 saw a record-breaking 465,498 attendees visit Victoria to watch the absolute best drivers compete against each other in the fastest and most thrilling motorsport competition in the world. When you have a world-class event on the global stage with all eyes watching Melbourne, it is essential to make sure that the operations run smoothly, that international visitors have a great experience in Victoria and that local businesses reap the economic benefits of the race.

This bill makes several minor but sensible amendments to the grand prix act, and we support measures that make the event better and safer for everyone but also more exciting for everyone. And I have to say that that record attendance last year of 465,498 will be broken this year, and I know that will be broken because I buy tickets to the grand prix. I buy them for my nephews also for Christmas, four-day passes. Usually we have been in a grandstand for those four days; this year I could not get a ticket. I do not have a ticket for the grand prix – Minister, are you listening, because I do not have a ticket to attend this year and I am very upset about it. But hopefully I will be able to score one between now and the grand prix and get there to cheer Oscar on on the day.

As a Liberal I proudly acknowledge the important role that Jeff Kennett and his government played in bringing the Australian Grand Prix to Victoria, and part of that also was Ron Walker. Ron Walker and Jeff together were a powerful force. They were visionary leaders who saw the potential that Melbourne had to deliver an outstanding event in this city, and they showed dogged persistence in taking hold of that opportunity. They secured the contract in 1993 to bring the race here from 1996 onwards, and since then the popularity of the race has continued to grow. The grand prix event makes a huge contribution to the Victorian economy, increasing state GDP by an estimated \$323 million.

However, it is worth noting that the state subsidises the event to the tune of around \$100 million, and that amount has been going up every year. There is a real concern that the taxpayer is being asked to pay more and more money for what should be a commercially successful event. It is crucial to ensure that the race is financially sustainable into the future and will not become a burden on taxpayers. The member for Nepean noted in his contribution to the debate in the other place that former Premier Daniel Andrews personally took over contract negotiations from the then Australian Grand Prix Corporation chairman Paul Little and chief executive Andrew Westacott, and reporting by Chip Le Grand in the *Age* revealed that Victoria's contract extension to keep the Australian Grand Prix contained a previously undisclosed provision that the state would meet the cost of new or substantially refurbished corporate hospitality facilities. This is expected to require the government to invest over \$350 million in a new pit building. Investment like this is appropriate when it creates a positive return to the state's economy, but an event like the grand prix is not a blank cheque for the government to splash taxpayers money around without accountability.

This bill will allow the minister to approve the Australian Grand Prix Corporation hosting non-motorsport events, and it is essential that this power is used responsibly.

We cannot allow non-sporting events to create further dependency on taxpayer subsidies and payments from the government, adding further to Victoria's sky-high debt that has been run up under this Labor government, which will reach almost \$200 billion. Some of these non-motorsport events could actually make money and subsidise the grand prix if they were run properly – if they were run like a business. What needs to happen here is we need a Liberal minister running the grand prix because we run things like a business. We will run that to be a benefit to the state, not a burden on the state. Non-motorsport events must be revenue positive and support the financial position of the corporation to ensure the grand prix is fiscally sustainable.

It is important to acknowledge that while the race brings hundreds of thousands of visitors to Melbourne and delivers a boost to the economy, closing the area off seriously interrupts recreational use of the park, which is public land that is supposed to remain open for the enjoyment of all Victorians. There are numerous community groups and everyday users of Albert Park who will be impacted by the lengthier closures of the area when the race period is extended: joggers and golfers, commuters who cycle through the park to get to work and sailing and rowing clubs. People who normally ride their bike through the park are diverted onto busy roads with heavy traffic during the race period, and this increases the danger that riders face and needs to be considered. We must also remember that while many businesses benefit from the influx of visitors, many other local businesses have their operations disrupted every year by this event.

My apartment here in Melbourne is very near to the Exhibition Building, and I do remember when another large event here in Melbourne, the flower and garden show, was under threat because residents who lived around the area near the Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens were upset because the gardens are closed for a period of time when the event is on – for the two weeks of the event and also a week before and a few days after while there is set-up and pack-up of the event, as well as the time that the event is open. I could understand why some of the people who live in that area and who use the park regularly were upset by this, but in reality it is a short period of time that allows for these major events to happen in our city. What I enjoy about the flower and garden show is watching other people enjoy those gardens. The gardens that those who are live in the area enjoy year-round do not actually belong to those people, they belong to the people of Victoria. What we see is more and more people enjoying the Carlton Gardens when the flower and garden show is on.

Whilst we want to make sure that there is not too much interruption to the people in the Albert Park area, that they do still have access to their parks et cetera and the businesses still are profitable, it is good to see other people enjoying that parkland as well. But it does not need the entire park locked off when the grand prix is being set up, and I am quite sure that there can be an arrangement come to where there are select areas rather than the entire Albert Park area being locked off for the three weeks when they want to do that before the event. This is a big impact that an area closure has on residents and everyday users, as well as the local businesses, and it is vitally important that the government actually do proper consultation before making big changes to the time period that the Albert Park area can be fenced off from the public. But typically for this Labor government, these changes were announced as a surprise to locals, who were not given an opportunity to have their say. The government cannot be surprised that people object to things when the government just surprised them with these announcements. The member for Prahran in the upper place, who represents her constituents that live very close to the race zone, noted in her contribution that even the Port Phillip deputy mayor Bryan Mears did not get any prior notice about the proposed 21-day closure of Albert Park Reserve. If deputy mayors are left in the dark, how must ordinary residents feel to have this surprise pushed on them? Residents have learned to live with the traffic, the noise levels and the restrictions of their movements, but imposing further restrictions should not happen without first giving them a chance to express their views on any proposal.

The changes in this bill are minor and we are supporting them, but the lack of consultation beforehand is typical of the Labor government that has become arrogant and thinks it can do whatever it wants. We are going through this in northern Victoria at the moment with a change to the Central North renewable energy zone, which happened with no consultation. To go from a draft report that had REZs in it, that people were able to do consultation on, to a final report that has a completely new REZ that no-one has been consulted about, no-one has been able to give feedback on, is just shocking.

One final concern for me in this bill involves the payment made to Parks Victoria. The bill increases that contribution from \$100,000 to \$200,000, but there is no guarantee in the bill that this money will be used for site remediation at Albert Park. Therefore Parks Victoria could use it for anything – to pay for more bureaucrats or other Parks Victoria projects. *(Time expired)*

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (15:41): The Libertarian Party does not oppose large events and does not oppose sometimes having these events in public places, but what I do oppose is subsidising these events when they are uneconomic in their own right. As has been pointed out, hundreds of millions of dollars has been spent on subsidising the grand prix.

I want to bring up something that has not been brought up in this debate, and in fact it has not been brought up a lot at all. It is something that really concerns me and I think needs to be addressed by the grand prix corporation. In June 2022, and you might remember we were quite busy with the pandemic and stuff back then, there was a report, a scientific study by Melbourne University, and it was titled – the quite unappealing title, I might add – ‘Field-based distribution and bioaccumulation factors for cyclic and aliphatic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs) in an urban sedentary waterbird population’. What they did was they studied the swans at Albert Park Lake for PFAS, and what they

found was very concerning. Now, if you know anything about PFAS, you will know that in high concentrations it gets concentrated in eggs, in particular, and can cause birth defects and all sorts of other serious problems. I will quote from the abstract of this report:

Environmental concentrations of PFASs were consistent with a highly impacted ecosystem and notably high concentrations of perfluoro-4-ethylcyclohexanesulfonate –

also known as PFECHS –

were detected in water ... and swan serum ... In the absence of creditable putative alternative sources of PFECHS input to the lake, we propose that the use of high-performance motorsport vehicles is a likely source of contamination to this ecosystem.

We have a scientific report that says straight up that it thinks that the lake and the birds have been poisoned by chemicals that are being used by the grand prix, and yet no-one is talking about who is going to clean this up, who is going to pay to clean it up. I tell you what, I am sick of the taxpayers being the ones to pick up the bill for these things. What should happen is that the EPA should get out there and figure out what the hell is actually going on with these swans and whatever other contamination there is. I note that earlier today we were talking about Albert Park Lake, and there are already restrictions on catching fish – you are meant to release them back because of mercury, apparently. They need to figure out what is going on here and find out how this PFAS got there and who is responsible for it. One of the things that I found out – I have actually spoken to scientists about this – is that one of the reasons that they cannot confirm definitively is because the chemicals that they are using here are so unusual, but they are all top secret. Everything that they use for the lubrications and all these other things that they use in Formula One is all top secret, so they cannot get samples of it, they cannot test against it. I think it is absolutely outrageous. The EPA needs to get out there and figure out what the hell has been going on, and if it turns out that this contamination was due to the grand prix, then the grand prix corporation needs to pay to clean it up, not the Victorian taxpayer.

David ETTERSHANK (Western Metropolitan) (15:4): I rise to make a contribution to the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025 on behalf of Legalise Cannabis Victoria. The Legalise Cannabis Party is, let us say, a broad church with a diversity of opinions on most things – apart from the legalisation of cannabis, on which its members are in lock step. In contributing to this debate I am mindful of the differing views of our supporters. A great many of our supporters absolutely love the grand prix. They reckon it is the best weekend you can have in Melbourne – and who can blame them? There is no question that the Australian Grand Prix at Albert Park is one of the great sporting spectacles in the country. It is a fabulous, well-organised event that puts Melbourne on the global stage, attracts thousands of people to Melbourne and creates jobs for locals. Legalise Cannabis also has supporters who absolutely loathe it. To them it is nothing more than an overpriced behemoth run by billionaires that has cost this state hundreds of millions of dollars over the last decade. They consider it a grotesque celebration of fossil fuel consumption and environmental vandalism at a time when we are witnessing climate-fuelled disasters every other day. As I said, we are a broad church with many competing views.

Recently a review was conducted into the grand prix by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) and the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions. We have not seen that review. It has not been made public, but we understand that the bill before us acts on the recommendations of that review. At the end of the day we are extremely supportive of the rights of people to participate in the grand prix, and we have no issue with improving governance of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation board and other provisions of the bill. However, I am mindful of the competing needs of the open space areas used during the bump in and bump out of the grand prix and during the race itself.

The fact is the people who live in this area are extremely inconvenienced by the grand prix, particularly those who regularly use the Albert Park reserve facilities, and that includes local residents, schools, sailing and rowing clubs and visitors to the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre. That adds up to about 7.2 million users per year. Currently the park is completely inaccessible for a seven-day period, with ongoing restricted access to parts of the park in the lead-up and post-race periods due to all the infrastructure installation and dismantling. The government is seeking for that exclusion period to

extend from seven days to three weeks. The justification for this is that the grand prix's attendance has grown such that the AGPC simply does not have time to set up the necessary infrastructure in seven days. The safety of the general public was cited as a concern. Apparently people have been walking onto the site during set-up. There were also security concerns following some incidents of vandalism.

While I am sure the AGPC would appreciate the additional two weeks, nothing has essentially changed. Why does the AGPC need an additional two weeks to set up? The government has failed to make the argument as to why exclusively blocking access to Albert Park for an additional two weeks is necessary for safety or security. If the Las Vegas Grand Prix can manage the race set-up while avoiding a complete lockout up until the day before the actual race, why cannot we do the same? Why should the local communities be further disadvantaged and lose their amenities for three weeks in the absence of a compelling argument from the government? There has to be a balance. The residents of Albert Park and surrounds already have to endure a great deal before, during and after the grand prix.

The government has moved some amendments around the declaration of public access areas to ensure that the people affected by the closure get sufficient notice and to give some more flexibility for park tenants seeking additional compensation. We have no problem with supporting those amendments. The Greens will also be moving amendments which seek to remove the clause enabling the public access exclusion zone to extend to 21 days, increase the legislated payments to Parks Victoria from \$100,000 to \$500,000 and prevent any person who has served as a minister, cabinet secretary, parliamentary secretary or ministerial officer at any time in the preceding two years from being appointed to the board of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation. These are sensible amendments which we are happy to support.

We can also support the opposition amendments, which are similar in scope. We were not given those to review beforehand.

While we are on the grand prix – I know this is not the issue that the many stakeholders we have been contacted by are considering right at the moment – why are they subsidising this? We are being told to tighten our belts. We are seeing continual cuts to community services. For example, Parentline is being cut after 25 years of operation and will cease to operate at the end of this month. At a time when youth mental health issues are surging, we cannot afford the \$1.3 million to fund a service that takes up to 18,000 calls each year from distraught parents. But we can afford to subsidise a multibillion-dollar company to the tune of over \$100 million last year.

What is more, the government has expended \$350 million to upgrade the Albert Park pit lane. But is this included in the claimed benefits to the community? We just do not know. Why are we not at least asking for a meaningful contribution rather than the 25 cents per \$200 ticket price? That is right – of the \$200 you will pay for a ticket, 25 cents goes back to the government. We are told that the grand prix brings in \$3 for every dollar spent by the state, that it employs thousands of people and that it increases tourism. But much of this is taken on faith. There is no transparency around the costings and benefits of hosting the F1 grand prix. The calculations are totally opaque.

As I said, we support the right of people to participate in the grand prix and will be supporting this bill with the amendments, but there is no doubt that this is a costly event for the people of Victoria, and it is something that should be considered when important services are being cut elsewhere. Whatever benefits the grand prix may bring to Victoria, it should not be a one-way street.

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (15:52): I rise to speak on the Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025 and wish to outline my concerns with this piece of legislation. The government's main reason for the introduction of this bill and the for the most contentious part of it, the extension of the declared race period, was safety concerns on the site. These concerns are real and legitimate, and we do not deny that. This is to be expected, hosting an event with such a significant bump-in process and so much public interest in a usually public place. It is the reason why for weeks, including the last sitting week, I attempted to work with the government in good faith to try and make

this bill more acceptable. Unfortunately we were not able to get into a position with it that I could support. Unsurprisingly my main concern with the bill is the extension of the declared race period – or, to call it what it is, the lockout period. This would give the Australian Grand Prix Corporation the powers to lock the public out from the park for 21 days. This is a significant increase from what it currently is, at seven days. It is not clear to me that the extended lockout period will entirely fix security and safety issues on the site, and at the end of the day, people will jump fences.

This is a case of a global conglomerate coming in and steamrolling a local community. Based on my discussions with those in the local community, it is not only just not fair; one of the things that they want to see in return for this is an acknowledgement of the significant disruption to the park that they use 365 days a year. We also are not just talking about any park here. The Albert Park reserve is the largest community sporting precinct in Victoria by a considerable margin and the second largest in Australia. Parks Victoria estimates that Albert Park reserve has 7.8 million visits per year. It is thought that only 6 per cent of these are actually for the grand prix.

To remind the chamber, the Australian Grand Prix runs at a loss. Victorian taxpayers are left to prop up the event, with the government spending over \$100 million on it last year alone. Altogether, almost \$650 million has been spent on it since 2015. This is only expected to grow, and it does not even include the more than \$350 million commitment to rebuild the pit building and Paddock Club corporate entertainment area. This sits in contrast with Parks Victoria's annual operating budget for managing Albert Park reserve, which is only just over \$4 million. Excluding the grand prix, the state government has not funded a single major sports-related infrastructure project within Albert Park reserve since 2018, and this is one of the conversations that I have been trying to have with the government in relation to this bill.

The proposed increased payment from the grand prix corporation to Parks Victoria from \$100,000 to \$200,000 is a start, but still not nearly adequate. I will be supporting the amendment from the Greens to increase this to half a million dollars. Over recent weeks I have been in contact with representatives of the Albert Park community to really understand some of their concerns. I particularly want to acknowledge Hugo Armstrong, president of the Albert Park Sports Clubs Association, and Kelly Brennan, convenor of the community group Lake ALIVE! They, alongside the rest of the local community, have been outraged by much of what has been proposed in this bill. There is actually no way to be sure of the full extent of the concerns raised by the community, and unsurprisingly, the government is yet to publish the engagement summary report from the consultation it ran on this bill. I have heard a deep sense of frustration from the community that the grand prix gets whatever it wants. It disturbs the park for months at a time, all while community needs are ignored. Melbourne is already lacking in access to green open spaces. This bill would further restrict access to one of the most valuable and treasured parks in an area that is experiencing rapid densification. The government's house amendments do make improvements to the bill, but they are largely just tinkering around the edges. I do, however, particularly welcome the new compensation scheme, which really should have just been operating already.

It will come as no surprise that I would also like to touch on the grand prix's impacts to the wildlife in the park. Studies have shown a major increase in stress levels in the lake's black swans during the construction and during the race. In the 2025 event there were several incidents of wood ducks on the track, and 15 birds a week were dying from a botulism outbreak. While I did not quite get there with the government on this bill, I would like to thank the minister's office for their ongoing conversations on this bill and listening to and hearing our concerns. I want to be clear that I am not anti grand prix. I think it is a good event for Melbourne, and the benefits that it does provide to our local economy cannot be ignored, but that should not come at any cost.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jeff Bourman): In the absence of any further speakers, the minister to sum up.

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Skills and TAFE, Minister for Water) (15:57): I thank all members who have contributed to this debate in the chamber and in the other place. It is great to see so many people have indicated their support for this bill. Of course I also acknowledge those that have got questions and issues, and obviously we will deal with many of those issues in committee. Members have raised concerns with the extension of the race declaration time, in particular around the impacts it will have on public access and the local community. The grand prix's attendance growth, the government argues, is driving greater operating and infrastructure requirements for the event. The Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) constructs the equivalent of half the MCG in temporary seating. The attendance, as we have heard, has increased by 42 per cent since 2019. The extended race period will allow essential works to occur to set up the grand prix within the controlled environment, reducing safety risks, increasing security and protecting the public.

To give an example of a key safety concern in the week prior to and post the race period, there are multiple cranes lifting concrete barriers on a public road whilst cyclists, pedestrians, scooters and cars attempt to make their way through these areas. The advent of social media has also contributed to a situation where fans come into the park and seek to take selfies on the road and in construction zones before the park shutdown. Indeed I have been advised that some people have even had wedding photos taken. The AGPC has provided numerous examples of safety incidents which have occurred within Albert Park during the construction of the temporary circuit in the period before and after the existing seven-day race period. These include pedestrian and cyclist injuries, members of the public entering construction zones and vehicles crashing through fencing and driving erratically on the track. In early March there was even an unauthorised car club meet-up, creating safety hazards for the public and for workers.

In addition, there have been several security incidents, including track damage, fires lit on the track, vandalism and theft, including cables cut and stolen.

WorkSafe Victoria supports the 21-day race period to achieve safety within the controlled management environment. WorkSafe has told us that the 21-day race period will help resolve a lot of key issues for contractors onsite to get the job done safely, with exclusion zones. The chief executive officer of WorkSafe also wrote to the Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC Ben Carroll on 9 September outlining their concerns with safety at Albert Park under the current arrangements. This letter outlines the safety concerns for workers and for members of the public, and I am happy to table this letter for the chamber. Anyone deserves a safe workplace. People cannot enter worksites or construction sites freely to wander around. It simply is not safe, not for the public and not for workers. You either believe WorkSafe – you trust their expert advice – or you do not. Either you support safety for workers and the public, or you do not. Either you support the grand prix, or you do not.

To maximise community access to the park during the race period in a safe manner the bill proposes to allow the AGPC in consultation with the minister to declare public access areas. These will include parts of Albert Park which are not required for the construction of temporary infrastructure for the event. I have also been advised that the AGPC and the minister will declare the following areas for public access during the extended race period, outside the current seven-day race period that is currently in place. They are Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre, Lakeside Stadium and areas north and east of it to enable access to the lake, South Melbourne Primary School, the Mac.Robertson Girls' High School, St Kilda Park Primary, Melbourne Golf Park, Middle Park Bowls Club and sporting fields to the south-east of Albert Park Lake. This provision ensures that we can maximise community access to Albert Park whilst managing the safety risks.

I am also aware that members raised concerns that the bill allows the AGPC to potentially run other events in Albert Park and about what that might mean for the community. Currently the AGPC is authorised to host motorsport events, including the Formula One Grand Prix and the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix. This power extends to related events, like Glamour on the Grid or a concert performance staged during the grand prix and MotoGP. The bill provides the AGPC with the ability to host any type of event that is not a motorsport event or Formula One event. Whilst there are no

current plans to hold additional events, this will enable the AGPC to pursue additional fundraising opportunities to help reduce its reliance on the Victorian government's annual funding contribution.

It is important to note that other events can only be held with the approval of the minister and can be held statewide in other locations, not necessarily Albert Park. I would also reiterate that no motorsport event can be held at Albert Park other than the grand prix during and outside the race period. When considering an application, the minister may consider a wide range of criteria, including financial sustainability of the event, potential impacts on tenants or the committee of management if the event is proposed to be held at Albert Park, operational matters such as traffic or security and any other matter the minister considers relevant, so any future decisions around this will come with proper accountability and will follow a proper process.

I have also been advised by the minister in the other place that Parks Victoria will establish a new Albert Park advisory committee to facilitate better engagement with the broader Albert Park stakeholder group. The advisory committee will act as a forum for Parks Victoria as the committee of management for Albert Park to consult with stakeholders on matters relating to the operations and management of the park. The advisory group will comprise representatives from the diverse mix of Albert Park stakeholders, including indoor and outdoor sporting groups, lake users, commercial and trader tenants, local government, TOs and of course the AGPC. In regard to concerns about the payment to Parks Victoria, the AGPC is legislatively required to pay Parks Victoria an amount up to \$100,000 per annum. The amendment proposes to increase this figure to \$200,000 to keep up with inflation.

This increased payment will enable Parks Victoria to better perform its support duties. It is also the sum that was requested by Parks Victoria. The bill also enables future payment increases to be prescribed in regulations, allowing for adjustments to reflect Parks Victoria's evolving funding requirements for the grand prix. While some members have also raised concerns about this amount being insufficient, this new mechanism makes it easier for the payment to increase in the future to support the important work that Parks Victoria does.

I would also like to speak to one of the amendments that I understand the Greens members are putting forward regarding the Governor in Council appointments to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) board. The government's appointment and remuneration guidelines, which are publicly available, outline Victoria's standard processes for appointing people to government boards and offices. This is a transparent and rigorous process to ensure integrity in appointments. When filling a board vacancy, consideration must be given to the mix of skills and expertise, lived experience, personal qualities, diversity and gender balance of existing board members. This amendment would inappropriately cut across that process.

Supporting this bill will make Albert Park safer during the construction of the largest temporary race circuit in the world. Public access will be maximised within the period where safe to do so. After further discussions on this bill, the government has a set of amendments, and I seek to have those provided. They deal with, firstly, an additional consideration which ministers must consider when declaring a declared area; secondly, early notification of declared public access areas; and thirdly, a new annual compensation scheme to complement the existing scheme to ensure that tenants and businesses impacted by an extended race period are eligible for compensation. As I said, I would like those circulated now.

Furthermore, as a show of good faith, the government would like to circulate a map of Albert Park, showing the proposed areas to be declared by the AGPC as public access areas for the 2026 race period, and accordingly, I seek that that be circulated as well.

That being the case, I think I have covered off in dealing with most of the issues that have been raised by speakers this afternoon, but I understand we will be going into committee, and I am happy to deal with further issues as they may arise.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Committed.

Committee

Clause 1 (16:09)

Georgie CROZIER: I might ask a number of questions in clause 1, if I may, just in the interests of time, rather than going clause by clause. My first question is: was the extension from seven days to 21 – we have outlined that, and we have had the debate around the safety concerns – requested by Formula One Management or was it initiated by the government?

Gayle TIERNEY: It was both, because they had conversations over a number of incidents that had happened, so it was instigated as a result of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation as well as WorkSafe.

Georgie CROZIER: So given those comments and the incidents – I know that there was, and I referred to in the debate, graffiti and vandalism – was there a particular incident that sparked this extension that put somebody's life at risk, or was there just a discussion around the consideration that it was potentially going to put somebody's life at risk?

Gayle TIERNEY: It was a series of discussions. In addition to that, there was theft of equipment and there were also fires lit as well, which was quite concerning. But of course there were also a number of near misses in terms of equipment and people being potentially injured.

Georgie CROZIER: Given there are issues around, as you said, theft, vandalism and some incidents that people were concerned about, why would you not increase the security to ensure those incidents and crimes are not occurring?

Gayle TIERNEY: That was done as well.

Georgie CROZIER: To what extent?

Gayle TIERNEY: Extra security was employed, and that is reviewed definitely on an annual basis. But if required, because of increased incidents or if there is a view that it is not adequate, then there are further discussions in terms of increasing the security.

Georgie CROZIER: Seven days to 21 days is quite a significant amount of time. Given what you have described, a fire was lit. It could have been a little fire; it could have been an extensive fire. It could have been potentially dangerous; it could have been just a bit of smoke. Theft of equipment is not an overly onerous issue around safety, but I understand that there are concerns around people coming into the area. My question is: was the extension of the race period anything to do with the extension of the grand prix contract, and was this taken into consideration as well in relation to that contract extension?

Gayle TIERNEY: They would be matters that I would not be aware of for obvious reasons. I am not the minister, and I think that is probably also a question that is probably bound up with commercial in confidence. But can I say that in terms of safety issues, as I said in my summing up, for people on scooters, cyclists, pedestrians and drivers of cars, there were a number of near misses that were of concern to all those that had a connection with the grand prix.

Georgie CROZIER: I know Ms Copsey has got a line of questions, but if I could just finish, I will hand over to her. I understand there are issues around safety, but scooters and people going around Albert Park happen all the time. Are you saying that these incidents happened in that 21-day period, or did they happen in the seven-day period? I can see the adviser saying 21. Thank you very much for that confirmation.

I do understand that you are not going to be able to provide the details of the contract. However, I think it is important to understand whether that was a consideration, given the discussions of government with the grand prix corporation. Can you comment on that?

Gayle TIERNEY: I think it is fair to say, given that there was an interface between local community activity, whether it be from pedestrians, cyclists or whatever, and the construction, as I said, of something quite significant in terms of temporary seating and other facilities, that interface often resulted in near misses – and injuries as well, I am informed.

Georgie CROZIER: ‘How many injuries?’ is the first question.

My next question – you mentioned the community. Could you provide to the committee what consultation occurred with the residents and the community interests in the Albert Park precinct who are affected by the changes, Parks Victoria also – what input did they have? – and any other members of the community that utilise the services, prior to the drafting of this legislation?

Gayle TIERNEY: In terms of injuries and near misses, it was primarily pedestrians and cyclists who were going through the park, and sometimes they were also doing it in unauthorised areas and construction areas where they should not have been in the first place.

In terms of consultation, the consultation has been occurring on a consistent basis, I am advised, with all of the community tenant organisations at Albert Park. There is also a review at the conclusion of each year of the race to see what the learnings were and whether other changes or improvements need to be put in place. And of course Parks Victoria has been involved in the consultations as well.

Georgie CROZIER: I will hand over to Ms Copsey, but what were the learnings, Minister, from the feedback from tenants?

Gayle TIERNEY: I said it in a general sense, that that is an exercise, a mechanism, that is used by the grand prix corporation and others at the end of each session. I do not have that sort of information, but that is –

Georgie Crozier interjected.

Gayle TIERNEY: Sorry?

Georgie CROZIER: Does the government have the information?

Gayle TIERNEY: Well, some of it is information like the number of injuries and incidents that have occurred that make it more difficult for there to be a safe environment for all concerned.

Georgie CROZIER: I have got more questions, but I will hand over to Ms Copsey.

Katherine COPSEY: Thank you, Ms Crozier. I also have questions on this topic. I want to understand if I have heard the minister correctly in this committee stage. When you are talking about incidents with pedestrians and cyclists, are you referring to people simply being in areas that the grand prix do not want them to be? Does a near miss or something mean a person being in an area that they are not supposed to be?

Gayle TIERNEY: My understanding is that there were a number of categories. One was being on a construction site when you should not be on a construction site. As we all know, in terms of construction sites, you need to be authorised, you need to have the proper equipment and you need to have a purpose to be there. Also there were injuries that were a result of equipment – cranes, stands, seating, all of those things – being moved around when there were pedestrians, cyclists and others undertaking activities in close proximity to that activity.

Katherine COPSEY: Obviously, as the statement of compatibility says, this bill severely limits the freedom of movement of the general public to a public park reserve during the race period. What methods have you looked at – I know we have talked about security in your answer to Ms Crozier –

that would have been less invasive and less of an imposition on the general public than the one that the government has landed on with this bill? What other mechanisms for controlling this stated risk did you consider?

Gayle TIERNEY: The imperative in all of this was to ensure that there is and continues to be safety. Again, this is, as I understand it, the largest temporary racetrack in the world. That was the thing that was at the forefront of everyone's minds when trying to work through this. Again, in my summing up, as I stated, you either accept that there were some serious safety concerns and you accept that WorkSafe had also made a determination or you do not. It is pretty simple. Indeed the letter from the CEO of WorkSafe to the Deputy Premier said:

I write to you regarding the Victorian Government's *Australian Grands Prix Amendment Bill 2025* that is currently before the Parliament of Victoria.

WorkSafe Victoria acknowledges that the Australian F1 Grand Prix is a major event for Victoria and continues to grow year on year. WorkSafe has previously discussed with the Australian Grand Prix Corporation concerns regarding the safety of workers and the public including pedestrians, cyclists and dog walkers on site at Albert Park.

Under the Victorian *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*, the Australian Grand Prix Corporation must do everything reasonably practicable to protect the health and safety of workers and members of the public, including providing a safe working environment. In providing additional time for contractors on site, the proposed amendments would have the effect of reducing safety risks and hazards associated with construction and mobile plant.

As we have for many years, we will continue to work with the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to reduce workplace harm associated with this major event.

I think that is pretty short.

Katherine COPSEY: Thank you, Minister, for that information, but I asked if you had considered if there was a more proportionate response to controlling these risks. I understand the evidence that you are asserting supports the government's position. I am interested to know whether WorkSafe's contribution to this came after the government had developed its proposal in relation to shutting the community out of this park for three weeks. Returning to the question I asked previously, did you consider another option that did not involve shutting the community out of the park for three weeks to respond to this risk?

Gayle TIERNEY: I reiterate that I am not the minister; I am representing the minister in committee today. It is my understanding that in terms of those involved in making this decision, it essentially went to the heart of what was the safest and most efficient way of dealing with these safety concerns, and to extend it to extra days was considered to be the most appropriate measure.

Georgie CROZIER: Minister, I am wondering if you could table the letter that was provided from WorkSafe to the Deputy Premier, please.

Gayle TIERNEY: My understanding is that it already has been tabled, but I am happy to.

Georgie CROZIER: Thank you. I asked because when the opposition requested stuff, there were, I think, selective points provided to them. So we have not seen the letter in full. But thank you for that confirmation.

Gayle TIERNEY: It is pretty hard to be selective with that letter.

Georgie CROZIER: Look, I appreciate what the concerns were from WorkSafe, but we have had a few near misses and we have had a fire – I do not know how extended it was. I think we have got a right to ask what the concerns were, given the impacts to the community, and to understand what has gone on here, given that we do not know the details of the contract and you cannot answer about whether that was a consideration for the extension. Nevertheless I will move on.

I would like to go to the issue around the map, which has been circulated to members, and around access. The map obviously, for anyone who is watching this or reading about it in *Hansard*, defines the Albert Park Lake in orange. Surrounding lines are in red, around the boundary of the lake and various roads that I can determine, plus a number of buildings are designated in red, and then there are blue or purple zones, which are large, extensive parts of the park, as well as yellow. In the interests of the community and for everybody involved, I am wondering if you could explain to the committee the map and how that in a practical sense will ensure that the community have access and that sporting groups and businesses that are operating in these defined areas can continue to do so, given the assurances that you have provided to the opposition and the work that the opposition have done in the in the break that we have just had to get the amendments that the government will be moving to ensure that compensation is paid to tenants and that the public have greater access to the park.

Gayle TIERNEY: Just to indicate for the record, I am happy to answer any questions on this, because our position is quite clear and the letter from WorkSafe is quite clear as well. There are not any real grey matters here for the government in respect to this, but I am more than happy to entertain whatever questions you might ask.

Now, in terms of the map, is this part of your electorate?

Georgie CROZIER: Yes, it is – absolutely.

Gayle TIERNEY: So you are pretty familiar with this area.

Georgie CROZIER: Very. My constituents, Minister, have been reaching out to me, and I want to get some clarification on their behalf.

Gayle TIERNEY: Okay. I understand that there have been some discussions, and the net result is that we are making sure that we are providing as much access as we can, particularly to those tied up with certain sporting facilities that are there.

It is very hard if you have got constituents that are listening in or trying to watch when there is one piece of A4 paper in front of us and it is colour coded, but I can assure you that what we have here is the lake and the surrounding activities.

Those activities that are in yellow are the public access areas to be provided during weeks 1 and 3 of the extended race period. A lot of that is ovals and I think the bowls club and a number of other things that are on the perimeter. So it makes it easier for those who are participating in those sports and who are club members to actually walk or be in a car and get into the facility that they are seeking. For the hatched lake area, lake access for tenants is to be provided on a case-by-case basis working with the AGPC operations team. So they will be people essentially that would be members of different things, not just people turning up thinking, 'It's a nice day and we'll go for a bit of a sail.' The blue shows those areas where there is no public access, which is consistent with the current F1 build program where AGPC takes over these parts of the park in the lead-up to the event. The red shows areas which will now no longer be available during the extended race period for public access due to unacceptable safety risks. What you might see on this map in reference to that last point I made is what looks like a road that is red – that will be closed. The situation we had there, by all accounts, was that people were using it as their own personal racetrack and were actually running into barricades, and so that has been shut based on safety concerns and the unacceptable safety risks that have emerged.

Georgie CROZIER: I might just go into a little bit more detail because it is difficult, as we both acknowledge. The lake is in red, so for the three weeks will that be open to rowing clubs or not? Or is it just the second week under the new arrangements with the coalition? Are the rowing clubs getting access to the lake for the first and the third week, but not the middle week, is my first question.

Gayle TIERNEY: The hatched lake area, which is orange, that will be the area that I mentioned earlier where you would have access, if you are a club member of the various water sporting clubs, in weeks one and three, yes.

Georgie CROZIER: Thank you for that clarification, that is what I was seeking. The yellow areas – and if you look at the map towards the north-west or towards the city, I will show you where I am talking about; that is towards the city – go bang onto the lake. Now, those yellow areas you said have access in weeks 1 and 3. Is that correct?

Gayle TIERNEY: Yes.

Georgie CROZIER: That footpath around the lake is excluded from any access for the full three weeks. Is that correct?

Gayle TIERNEY: Yes.

Georgie CROZIER: The buildings that are attached to the lake, like the Power House and others that are in the red – I am sorry, I am pointing and showing – what access do they have during the three-week period?

Gayle TIERNEY: Just for clarity, Ms Crozier, do you mean the one near the bowls club and the one closer to the lake and the one over here? Is that correct?

Georgie CROZIER: Yes. That is the Power House. That is one of the – I cannot see. But yes, I think your advisers will be able to assist me.

Gayle TIERNEY: For the record, it is admin access for the relevant clubs.

Georgie CROZIER: Okay. And in relation to the golf club, which is also an important part of this precinct, is the Albert Park golf club affected by the extended race period, or is it already closed for an extended period due to a pre-existing arrangement with the grand prix corporation?

Gayle TIERNEY: There is a pre-arrangement in existence, and they are closed for four weeks. That is not new.

Georgie CROZIER: Okay. And are there any other tenants already engaged in commercial arrangements longer than the current seven-day race period with the corporation, such as what you just confirmed with the golf club?

Gayle TIERNEY: There are arrangements in place, but now, with weeks 1 and 3, there are currently conversations going on with those businesses. And then of course there is the compensation scheme, which we will deal with a little bit later. That would kick in, one would assume, in terms of discussions in relation to things like that.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, who developed this map?

Gayle TIERNEY: The AGPC.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, who has been consulted in developing the access arrangements that are depicted in this map?

Gayle TIERNEY: It is my understanding that the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) and the Grand Prix Corporation consulted with, I am advised, all of the stakeholders that are located on that site.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, perhaps you mean all of the stakeholders that occupy those marked tenancies, because I am pretty sure that there are stakeholders within the blue area of this map in particular. I am pretty sure there are community stakeholders who have not seen this map or been consulted.

Gayle TIERNEY: For the record, contact was made with all tenants, I am advised.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, can you take me through again why the lake path, which is this red line that goes around the lake itself, the footpath, needs to be closed given it can be accessed through this yellow hatched area, the aquatic centre?

Gayle TIERNEY: It will be for weeks 1, 2 and 3, and it is an operational requirement in relation to the grand prix given that there are temporary constructions that are very close to that pathway.

Katherine COPSEY: Just so I am clear, the Australian Grand Prix Corporation is unable to safely carry out its operations without affecting residents and citizens of Victoria walking around a footpath around a lake, and the government is going to let them take that away from people. You have not tried to ameliorate that; you have not tried to find out if there is a less intrusive way for this to be achieved.

Gayle TIERNEY: Again, the objective here is safety. Given that there is activity around this area, it is an area that is currently shut down for seven days and it is proposed that it will be shut down for three weeks.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, why is the Australian Grand Prix Corporation so bad at doing the event set-up for this event when you compare it to international examples like the Las Vegas Grand Prix, which manages to do its set-up and pack down with just a few days of closure period?

Gayle TIERNEY: Again, I cannot comment in terms of what occurs in other jurisdictions. What I can comment on are the views of those that have been involved in these discussions. Again, the imperative for all of those involved was to absolutely minimise any prospect of safety concerns.

Katherine COPSEY: With respect, Minister, it is entirely relevant. The events are similar in scale and size. I do not understand why Victorian ministers and departments are not asking the grand prix corporation to achieve a standard that we see is entirely possible in other cities. Why should Melburnians suffer a greater imposition because the grand prix cannot get its act together?

Gayle TIERNEY: Again, you are assuming a few things in that comment, which I disagree with. But regardless, you are also asking me for an opinion and to make comment on venues that I am not acquainted with, and it is my understanding that the imperative was to get this venue sorted in terms of the applications of safety requirements.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, with all due respect, you are not contending that the Albert Park site, which is largely open space sporting venues and a well-loved nature reserve, is more complex than the Las Vegas strip in terms of pedestrian activity or commercial activity? Surely you can make a comparison between those two and see that Melbourne should be an easy site for them to manage without having a huge imposition, as compared to Vegas.

Gayle TIERNEY: Ms Copsey, I am just not going to be drawn on other venues that I am not familiar with; it is just inappropriate. I just do not think it is proper or acceptable for me to make comment on situations that I am not familiar with. I certainly would not be familiar with the Las Vegas arrangement. I do not have a map or an understanding of how that precinct works at all – whether there is a grand prix applied to it or not.

Katherine COPSEY: Were you briefed on other international grands prix, out of interest?

Gayle TIERNEY: Personally, no, I was not.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, I thank you for your response earlier around whether there were alternatives to the three-week lockdown considered, and I appreciate you have said several times in this debate that you are representing the minister responsible. I just want to confirm my understanding from your earlier answer. I took your response to say that you were not aware of any alternative to the three-week lockdown that had been considered by the minister.

Gayle TIERNEY: I am prepared to seek advice from the minister as to what he may have entertained, but personally, no, and I do not think you would expect me to.

I have sought advice in terms of the general question, Ms Copsey, about ‘Las Vegas can do it, why not Albert Park?’ – along those lines. We are the second biggest grand prix in the world. They have 150,000 less people. We are the largest temporary circuit. There is a three- to four-month build in Las Vegas, and that is at a cost of \$400 million.

Katherine COPSEY: That is all useful information. The question I had just asked was about whether there had been alternatives to the three-week lockdown considered by the actual minister.

Gayle TIERNEY: It is my understanding that throughout all of this, as I have said and I will restate again, the objective was to ensure that we have got the safest environment in the construction and the disassembly of the area. In terms of other options, there were some examples, as I understand it. I am not familiar with the detail of that, but I can say that the safety considerations were overwhelmingly better in terms of the option that was landed on here in terms of extending it to 21 days.

Katherine COPSEY: Did the minister consider a shorter period?

Gayle TIERNEY: Again, the answer is the safety considerations outweighed a whole range of other considerations, Ms Copsey.

Katherine COPSEY: Given you have just outlined these overwhelming safety considerations that the government has been convinced of and you have also outlined that we have the largest temporary circuit of any Formula One event in the world, during this term of government has the government considered the relocation of the Australian Grand Prix to a purpose-built event space?

Gayle TIERNEY: No.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, just going back to the exclusion area and the incidents that you have referred to. We have heard from community members who are concerned by the safety implications of the extended lockdown period and the extensive closure of the pedestrian and cycling network that this is going to cause. Many people, myself included, use the cycling and walking paths through Albert Park for a safe commute. What consideration has been given to the dangers that will be created for pedestrians and cyclists by losing access to these safe paths for the period of this lockdown?

Gayle TIERNEY: One of the considerations, of course, resulted in the yellow areas of the map, and that was to enable sporting club members in particular to be able to access those areas without having to go through the park as such, so that they can reach those amenities on the border of the park, Ms Copsey.

Katherine COPSEY: With respect, Minister, that does not answer my question. My question was about people using the walking and cycling paths to get through the park. How will the risks that are created for them by having to go onto the busy road network be addressed by this proposal?

Gayle TIERNEY: In terms of cyclists going through the park while this construction is underway, that has already been deemed to be unhelpful and unsafe. In terms of going onto the roads, the same rules and conditions that would apply to any other cyclist that would be using those roads and not be going through the park would apply.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, I do not know if you quite understand this. People are normally able to access accessways through the park. Admittedly, they get progressively shut down over a period of months as the infrastructure proliferates and starts to tear up the park and section off areas behind fences, where people cannot go. But there is usually the ability for people to still make their way through. This is a really important not only recreational but commuting link for people in the inner south. We have heard directly from constituents who are already concerned that they are going to be pushed onto the busy road network, and by extending the lockdown period, you are worsening that risk that already gets realised annually for people in this region. What is the government’s plan to deal with that risk that you are now creating, and how are you putting that in your calculus of this overarching emphasis you have on safety?

Gayle TIERNEY: As I have already stated, Ms Copsey – it is an answer that you do not like, but it is the answer that I will continue to give – in terms of the safety concerns about cyclists and pedestrians being near movable construction sites and cranes and other equipment, the imperative is to make sure that there is a reduction in safety hazards.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, I will tell you for sure, having had many, many experiences going down the pencil-thin painted bike lane along Canterbury Road, my personal risk assessment is that people are not as safe on the road as they are on a shared path, which is protected from traffic, which is usually provided by the park.

I am going to ask the question a different way: has the minister received advice on how to mitigate the risk posed to cyclists and pedestrians by being forced onto the arterial road network?

Gayle TIERNEY: It is my understanding that there are a number of conversations that are being conducted and there are discussions around how safety mitigations can be worked through, particularly for cyclists and of course a number of other user groups. The suggestion is that user groups and individuals should make contact with the grand prix corporation, who are undertaking those discussions with a variety of groups at the moment.

Katherine COPSEY: So this map is not the final map?

Gayle TIERNEY: It is the final map in terms of the general discussions that have led us to this point. But if there are some other tweaks that can assist in terms of the issues like the one that you have raised, then it would be silly to say that it has to be set in concrete. There has to be community consultation, and it has got to be on an ongoing basis. To then say, ‘Well, it’s not the final map,’ I think flies in the face of the objective that you are trying to seek.

Katherine COPSEY: Well, in one sense that is reassuring, but I think it just reiterates to me that there is not a lot of clarity for community users of the park on what the government and the opposition’s intent is with this set of amendments and these access agreements that are yet to be finalised.

I just want to go now to some of the amendments the government has put forward and ask a couple of questions on those – unless Ms Crozier had more questions in relation to the areas in the map.

Georgie Crozier: Not on the areas.

Katherine COPSEY: Okay. The first listed amendment – I am referring to an email we have received from the minister’s office outlining the government’s amendments, if that helps to follow along – is on consideration of declaring areas and the race periods, which will allow the minister, our understanding is, to have regard for the requirements of the event and the safety and security needs when declaring the area to be impacted by the race period. I just wanted to confirm that the factors that the minister are going to be considering in declaring the area to be impacted by the race period are safety and security needs, and that does not include a consideration of the community’s right of access to the park.

Gayle TIERNEY: Operational and safety considerations may include but are not limited to the grand prix event; build and dismantle programs for things such as grandstands, activations and other amenities, where this may interact with proposed public safe access areas; and any safety risks that could be posed to workers and the general public as a result of providing public access in a particular place.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, I wonder if you can highlight for me how the community, who are not the grand prix corporation advocating for its own interests, have input into that ministerial decision-making process? This is the consideration for declaring areas and the race period – new sections 27A to 27G – in the new clause that the government is proposing. How can the community have input to that process?

Gayle TIERNEY: That is a process that is undertaken by the minister on the advice that he seeks from, on this occasion, his department and other organisations, and like with any other issue, I would suggest that community members, who are well known for making their voices heard, write to the minister and have their views voiced through email, correspondence or whatever.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, that does not sound like a very formal consultation process to me – that community members should just be aware that the government is dealing on a day-to-day basis with requests from the grand prix for further access and exclusive use of private land and so should just write to the minister and hope that he will take that into account.

Gayle TIERNEY: I have also mentioned that there is an advisory committee that is going to be established as well, and that will be as a result of the stakeholders that are in that area. That would be a logical place in which you would raise issues and concerns as well.

Georgie CROZIER: Minister, I do not expect you obviously to disclose the details of the contract, but we are trying to work through a lot of these things. Can I just ask: back in 2023 when this contract was signed by the former Premier, Daniel Andrews, was the current minister involved in that, or was he cut out completely?

Gayle TIERNEY: I would need to check who the minister was at that time.

Georgie Crozier: It was Steve. I've checked.

Gayle TIERNEY: I am advised it was the former minister that was involved in those negotiations.

Georgie CROZIER: Okay, so it was Minister Pakula –

Gayle Tierney: That is what I am advised.

Georgie CROZIER: who is now the chair. Oh, there we are. Wow. Thank you for that clarification. I suppose it was, because there was a lead-up. There was quite a significant amount of public information around the fear of losing the grand prix, and the Premier had to step in. So it makes sense that Minister Pakula was at the helm of those initial negotiations. Of course we had COVID that shut the city down and caused chaos throughout the place, especially with the grand prix. So thank you for that clarification.

Katherine COPSEY: I just have one other question about the map. I understand your advice to the chamber is that this map has been prepared by the grand prix corporation. But I want to understand if, to your knowledge, there has been any consideration of equity of access for community members down the southern end of the park. Correct me if I am wrong here, but it looks to me as though vehicular access is mainly at this end where the aquatic centre is, which looks like this little tail.

Gayle TIERNEY: Yes.

Katherine COPSEY: Can you clarify for me if there is any other vehicular access point that is available during the three-week lockout period for residents?

Gayle TIERNEY: The site that you nominated, Ms Copsey, is not car access and is not vehicle access, but it is walking access. There are other roads which are within the yellow area where there is access. I have requested on your behalf a more detailed examination of those access points, if you wish, and there are people here that are more than happy to provide that assistance to you.

Katherine COPSEY: Just for the record, what I will state is I am concerned around whether there has been any consideration given to the many surrounding suburbs that abut Albert Park and the many residents that use it for recreational use. I want to make sure that in whatever access regime is figured out people are not having to travel from one end of the suburb to another simply to enter the park. I just put that as a comment for the record.

I move:

1. Clause 1, lines 5 and 6, omit all words and expressions on these lines.

This is the amendment that I have spoken to during my second-reading speech, which has the effect of retaining the one-week lockout period and not supporting the government's extension of the lockout of the community from Albert Park. As I have said extensively, the imposition on the local community by the grand prix is already too great. Every year it is months on end, actually, that the park is impacted, that the wildlife is impacted and that people steadily lose the quiet enjoyment of this vital public asset. It already takes months and months for the grounds to recover. I know that sporting groups and community groups are regularly disrupted, losing huge amounts because of the existing lockout period but also all of the disruption and interruption that is associated with this event. It is pretty galling that a Labor government is furthering the Kennett legacy of taking over this park for a big corporate event. The Greens do not support it. This amendment in my name has the effect of retaining the current already egregious one-week lockout.

Gayle TIERNEY: The government will not be supporting this proposed amendment. We have explained our position throughout the course of the debate in the lower house as well as here, and it is also contained in my summing-up speech.

Georgie CROZIER: The coalition will not be supporting the Greens amendment. Despite the concerns that we have raised, we have made some inroads with government, as I have highlighted in my speech, and we have also acknowledged the support of the grand prix.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question is that Ms Copsey's amendment 1 be agreed to. This tests her amendments 3, 4, 6 and 7.

Council divided on amendment:

Ayes (7): Katherine Copsey, David Ettershank, Anasina Gray-Barberio, Sarah Mansfield, Rachel Payne, Aiv Puglielli, Georgie Purcell

Noes (31): Ryan Batchelor, Melina Bath, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Jeff Bourman, Gaëlle Broad, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Enver Erdogan, Michael Galea, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, Shaun Leane, David Limbrick, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Bev McArthur, Joe McCracken, Nick McGowan, Tom McIntosh, Evan Mulholland, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Jaclyn Symes, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell, Sheena Watt, Richard Welch

Amendment negatived.

Clause agreed to; clauses 2 to 5 agreed to.

Clause 6 (17:22)

Gayle TIERNEY: I move:

1. Clause 6, page 4, line 14, omit "information." and insert "information; and".
2. Clause 6, page 4, after line 14 insert –

“(e) unless section 27CA applies, be made within one month after a declaration under section 27 of a declared area is made.”.
3. Clause 6, page 5, after line 17 insert –

“27CA Minister may direct Corporation to make public access area declaration

 - (1) If the Corporation does not make a public access area declaration within one month after a declaration under section 27 of a declared area is made, the Minister may –
 - (a) request that the Corporation provide the reasons no public access area declaration was made; and
 - (b) direct the Corporation to make a public access area declaration.
 - (2) Before giving a direction under subsection (1)(b), the Minister must have regard to –

- (a) the operational requirements of the Formula One event in respect of which the declared area will be in force; and
- (b) safety considerations related to the event.”.

Georgie CROZIER: The coalition will be supporting the government’s amendment, given the discussions that the opposition have had with the government, and thank the government for taking into consideration those concerns raised throughout that process that the opposition has undertaken on behalf of the community.

Katherine COPSEY: The Greens will not be opposing this amendment. This amendment, in my understanding, gives the minister the ability to declare access areas where the grand prix corporation has failed to do so. Therefore we support the minister having this discretion, though we do have concerns, as I outlined during the committee debate, that the only considerations that it appears the minister has to take into account are around the safety and security needs as determined, as we have seen, by the grand prix, which are pretty draconian. We would implore the minister to also, in making these decisions, consider the right of the public to access and put greater weight in future considerations on trying to balance the outcomes being sought to be achieved here to make sure that safety is not being used as an excuse to lock people out of a public reserve.

Gayle TIERNEY: Just in response to that can I also restate that I have been advised by the minister in the other place that Parks Victoria will establish a new Albert Park advisory committee to facilitate better engagement with the broader Albert Park stakeholder group. I think that is a good mechanism or vehicle to have a lot of the issues that you have raised today addressed through that organisation.

Katherine COPSEY: I appreciate the minister conveying that information to the chamber. What is the process for organisations and individuals who consider that they ought to be part of that advisory committee? How should they access it?

Gayle TIERNEY: That will be as a result of this bill going through. It has not been established yet, but it will, and it is a commitment. I know that Parks Victoria are already starting to draft what the process might look like.

Katherine COPSEY: It is disappointing that these things have not been worked out before we are on the floor of the house debating this bill, I will reiterate. It is frustrating for community members who did not feel that the consultation was adequate to begin with, but I welcome the commitment you have made there. I have, in the course of this debate, received a query from a community member who comments that Lake Alive currently monitor the health of the bird life, including the iconic black swans, in Albert Park, and they do that on a daily basis. The query is: how is that going to continue? Perhaps in relation to the advisory group structure you have just spoken about, could you provide an undertaking that there will be some mechanism considered to enable this important citizen-science activity to continue?

Gayle TIERNEY: Without wanting to go off on another particular path, this is a matter that I know that Ms Purcell has raised generally in terms of the swans on the lake. There is the ability to continue to talk through those issues, because the health and the environment of Albert Park Lake, including the swans and the birdlife, are incredibly important.

Amendments agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clauses 7 to 15 agreed to.

New clause 15A (17:27)

Katherine COPSEY: I move:

2. Insert the following New Clause to follow clause 15 –

‘15A Membership

- (1) In section 10(1) of the Principal Act, after “Council” **insert** “by notice published in the Government Gazette”.

(2) After section 10(2) of the Principal Act **insert** –

“(2A) Before appointing a member under this section, the Governor in Council must be satisfied that the person being appointed has not served as a Minister, Cabinet Secretary, Parliamentary Secretary or ministerial officer at any time in the 2 years immediately preceding the appointment.”.

This amendment is pertinent given some of the discussions we just had in committee. The effect of this is to create greater transparency and also a bit more distance between the government of the day and the Australian Grand Prix Corporation. The effect of this is that when the appointment of members of the grand prix board or the chair position is being undertaken, the appointment process simply will be notified in the *Government Gazette* so that it is a public process. The other part of this amendment is also a cooling-off period so that someone who has in the past two years been a minister, a cabinet secretary, a parliamentary secretary or ministerial office is not eligible for the position. Given the discussion that we just had in committee, where we have understood that the current board chair was involved in negotiations that I think are pertinent to the matters that we have discussed this afternoon in this bill, I think this is a really sensible amendment. Those opposite who are critical of the government’s revolving door on this issue, I would welcome your support on this amendment. It is something that we could actually advance to improve the governance here and make sure that the community is getting a fair hearing and not getting favourable treatment delivered to the grand prix corporation by the government of the day.

Georgie CROZIER: The coalition will not be supporting the Greens amendment, but I do understand the intent and I do share some of those concerns you raised. I think the questioning has given us a bit more transparency around what has gone on, not to the full extent that perhaps some of us would like, but nevertheless I do understand the intent. However, we will not be supporting your amendment at this point.

Gayle TIERNEY: I dealt with this in my summing-up speech, and again I reiterate that the government’s appointment and remuneration guidelines, which are publicly available, outline Victoria’s standard processes for appointing people to government boards and offices. When filling a board vacancy, consideration must be given to the mix of skills, expertise, lived experience, personal qualities, diversity and gender balance of existing board members, so we will not be supporting this proposed amendment.

David LIMBRICK: The Libertarian Party will be supporting this amendment. I think that this is a sensible measure. I also do not like the revolving door stuff that I see going on, so I will be supporting this.

Council divided on new clause:

Ayes (8): Katherine Copsey, David Ettershank, Anasina Gray-Barberio, David Limbrick, Sarah Mansfield, Rachel Payne, Aiv Puglielli, Georgie Purcell

Noes (29): Ryan Batchelor, Melina Bath, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Jeff Bourman, Gaelle Broad, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Enver Erdogan, Michael Galea, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, Shaun Leane, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Bev McArthur, Nick McGowan, Tom McIntosh, Evan Mulholland, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Jaclyn Symes, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell, Sheena Watt, Richard Welch

New clause negatived.

Clauses 16 to 19 agreed to.

Clause 20 (17:34)

Georgie CROZIER: Minister, clause 20 relates to the new function of giving power to the grand prix corporation to conduct events other than motorsport events. That is subject to the approval of the minister, and there has been some discussion around what those events look like. Are there any

limitations on what those events would entail? Could it be anything, or is it particularly related to motorsports?

Gayle TIERNEY: As I said in my summing-up speech, the events do not necessarily have to be connected to motorsports. It can be a variety of things.

Georgie CROZIER: If it is not related to motorsport, why does the Australian Grand Prix Corporation have to be involved in this, given they are only operating for a short period of time in the park?

Gayle TIERNEY: Because they have a contract for the space for that period of time, and as I said in my summing-up speech, it enables the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to have events that lead to increased revenue and then rely less on state government moneys for support.

Georgie CROZIER: So it is only for the three-week period – is that correct? Or does it extend out of that timeframe?

Gayle TIERNEY: It is not restricted to the actual Albert Park. It can be, for example, an F1 expo at the convention centre. In fact it can be other parts of Victoria as well.

Georgie CROZIER: I appreciate that, and that sort of makes sense to me. It is a motorsport-related exhibition or something that might go on, and I do not have a problem with any of that. I am just trying to understand why that cannot be done through the major events component of government without having this tied into the Australian Grand Prix Corporation.

Gayle TIERNEY: As you probably know, the major events activity is very active. This just provides an opportunity, as I said, for the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to raise revenues so that there is not such a reliance on the state government in terms of the contributions it makes.

Georgie CROZIER: Was that part of the contract that the government put in and insisted upon so that it would reduce taxpayer-funded money to the grand prix?

Gayle TIERNEY: This is potentially a commercial-in-confidence matter, and I am not in a position to provide further information in respect to that, Ms Crozier.

Clause agreed to; clause 21 agreed to.

Clause 22 (17:38)

Gayle TIERNEY: I move:

4. Clause 22, line 23, omit “In section 27(b)” and insert “(1) In section 27(b)”.
5. Clause 22, after line 24 insert –
 - ‘(2) At the end of section 27 of the Principal Act **insert** –
 - “(2) Before making a declaration under subsection (1)(b), the Ministers must have regard to –
 - (a) the operational requirements of the Formula One event in respect of which the declared area will be in force; and
 - (b) safety considerations related to the event.”.’.

Katherine COPSEY: Similar to the rationale for the previous amendments, we will not be opposing these amendments but hold similar reservations that there is not a consideration by the minister of the right of public access under these amendments.

Amendments agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clauses 23 and 24 agreed to.

Clause 25 (17:39)

Katherine COPSEY: I move:

5. **Suggested amendment to the Legislative Assembly –**
 Clause 25, line 24, omit “\$200 000” and insert “\$500 000”.

The effect of this suggested amendment is very simple. This takes the \$200,000 figure for payment by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to Parks Victoria and increases it to \$500,000.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: This is a suggested amendment, so if it is agreed to, this clause has to be postponed.

Gayle TIERNEY: I went through this in my summing up. The house amendment is to increase the figure to \$200,000 to keep up with inflation, but what we have done also is to create a mechanism so that in terms of future adjustments, they can be done more readily than what currently is the case.

David LIMBRICK: The Libertarian Party will be supporting this suggested amendment, mainly due to the concerns I had before about what it is going to cost to clean up some of this stuff. I do note, though, as the government has said, that there are mechanisms to do it for other amounts in the future. But yes, I will be supporting this suggested amendment.

Georgie CROZIER: The coalition will not be supporting the Greens suggested amendment.

Council divided on suggested amendment:

Ayes (8): Katherine Copsey, David Ettershank, Anasina Gray-Barberio, David Limbrick, Sarah Mansfield, Rachel Payne, Aiv Puglielli, Georgie Purcell

Noes (30): Ryan Batchelor, Melina Bath, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Jeff Bourman, Gaele Broad, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Enver Erdogan, Michael Galea, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, Shaun Leane, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Bev McArthur, Joe McCracken, Nick McGowan, Tom McIntosh, Evan Mulholland, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Jaclyn Symes, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell, Sheena Watt, Richard Welch

Suggested amendment negated.

Clause agreed to.

New clauses 25A and 25B (17:44)

Gayle TIERNEY: I move:

Insert the following new clauses to follow clause 25 –

25A Division 1 of Part 3 heading inserted

Before section 26 of the Principal Act, **insert** the following Division heading –

“**Division 1 – General**”.

25B New Division 2 of Part 3 inserted

At the end of Part 3 of the Principal Act **insert** –

“**Division 2 – Annual compensation scheme**

42AA Definitions for this Division

In this Division –

annual compensation scheme means a scheme approved under section 42AAC(3);

direct loss method has the meaning given in section 42AAI;

eligible Albert Park tenant means an entity that holds a lease, licence or other agreement in the declared area for a race period in respect of a year where the lease, licence or other agreement was entered into before 1 January 2026;

fixed amount method has the meaning given in section 42AAH.

42AAB Corporation to make compensation payments to eligible Albert Park tenants

The Corporation must pay compensation to eligible Albert Park tenants in accordance with the annual compensation scheme.

42AAC Annual compensation scheme

- (1) Each year, the Corporation must develop a draft annual compensation scheme for the purpose of payments under section 42AAB.
- (2) Not later than 3 months after the end of the race period in relation to a year, the Corporation must prepare and submit the draft annual compensation scheme to the Minister for approval.
- (3) The Minister may approve the draft annual compensation scheme if satisfied it is appropriate to do so, having regard to –
 - (a) the business plan under section 25; and
 - (b) in the case of any fixed amount method, the overall approach to assessing and calculating amounts.

42AAD Eligibility for compensation under the annual compensation scheme

- (1) An eligible Albert Park tenant is eligible for compensation under the annual compensation scheme if the eligible Albert Park tenant has suffered direct losses or expenses as a result of a race period for a year being a period not exceeding 21 days.
- (2) An entity is not eligible for compensation under the annual compensation scheme if a lease, licence or other agreement in the declared area to which the entity is a party is entered into on or after 1 January 2026.
- (3) An eligible Albert Park tenant may be eligible for compensation under the annual compensation scheme even if the tenant has closed the business or other operation conducted pursuant to a lease, licence or other agreement in the declared area for a race period in respect of a year during that race period.

42AAE Compensation under section 30(5) not affected

Nothing in this Division affects the operation of section 30(5) in relation to an eligible Albert Park tenant.

42AAF Corporation may request information

For the purposes of developing and administering the annual compensation scheme in accordance with this Division, the Corporation may request an eligible Albert Park tenant to provide any information necessary for the Corporation to make a proper assessment of the compensation payable to that tenant, including specifying a time for the provision of that information.

42AAG Compensation to be by fixed amount method or direct losses method

- (1) The Corporation must offer an eligible Albert Park tenant compensation from the annual compensation scheme by a fixed amount method based on a formula developed by the Corporation for calculating a fixed amount of compensation approved by the Minister in the annual compensation scheme approval.
- (2) If the eligible Albert Park tenant offered compensation under subsection (1) elects not to accept the compensation by the fixed amount method, the tenant must –
 - (a) advise the Corporation that the tenant seeks compensation by the direct losses method for direct losses incurred due to the period of the race period in respect of a year being a period not exceeding 21 days; and
 - (b) provide in support independently audited financial statements.

42AAH What does the Corporation consider for fixed amount method of compensation?

The Corporation must consider the following when an eligible Albert Park tenant chooses compensation by the fixed amount method –

- (a) the duration of the race period in respect of the year, being the race period minus 7 days and not exceeding a maximum of 14 days;
- (b) the number of days the eligible Albert Park tenant was directly affected by the period referred to in paragraph (a);
- (c) estimated losses by the eligible Albert Park tenant as a direct result of the period referred to in paragraph (a);

- (d) whether the eligible Albert Park tenant is entitled to compensation under section 30(5) or any other payment or remuneration under an arrangement entered into between the Corporation and the tenant;
- (e) any other matter the Corporation considers relevant.

42AAI What does the Corporation consider for direct losses method of compensation?

- (1) The Corporation must consider the following when an eligible Albert Park tenant chooses compensation by the direct losses method –
 - (a) the duration of the race period declared for the year, being the race period minus 7 days and not exceeding a maximum of 14 days;
 - (b) the number of days the eligible Albert Park tenant was directly affected by the period referred to in paragraph (a);
 - (c) actual quantifiable losses incurred by the eligible Albert Park tenant as a direct result of the period referred to in paragraph (a) which –
 - (i) must be supported by independently audited financial statements; and
 - (ii) may benchmark direct losses by consideration of losses or profits in a comparison period in the previous year to the current year which are the same days in that previous year as the days for the race period in relation to the current year for which the compensation is sought;

Example

The race period for 2026 is 1 to 21 April 2026. The race period in relation to the year 2025 is 1 to 21 March 2025. The comparison period for losses or profits for the 2026 race period is 1 to 21 April 2025.

- (d) whether the eligible Albert Park tenant is entitled to compensation under section 30(5) or any other payment or remuneration under an arrangement entered into between the Corporation and the tenant;
- (e) any other matter the Corporation considers relevant.
- (2) The Corporation may negotiate an amount of compensation with an eligible Albert Park tenant not exceeding the amount of direct loss claimed by the tenant.”.

Georgie CROZIER: I know this is part of the discussion the opposition had with the government, and again I thank the government for being so accommodating. I am just wondering, Minister, if you could provide us with how many tenants are expected to qualify for compensation in this new clause that has been put in and the work that we have done, and will subtenants and licensees be eligible under the definition of an eligible tenant?

Gayle TIERNEY: On the second part, I will seek advice in a moment. In terms of the first part of your question, it will be relatively small in number, as I understand it, but that will be worked through.

Georgie CROZIER: I appreciate you working through that list. When will that list of tenants be made available, do you think?

Gayle TIERNEY: We will take that on notice, but it is active as we speak.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, my understanding is that tenants in this compensation arrangement means, and it says in the definitions, ‘an entity that holds a lease, licence or other agreement in the declared area.’ Could you please provide an example of what an ‘other agreement’ would be?

Gayle TIERNEY: Well, it is fairly clear in terms of what is in. There might be an area that we have not uncovered as yet, so that just provides some leeway for those that are involved in this exercise.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, the concern I have outlined throughout the debate today is that I know for a fact there are community, sporting, environmental and community advocacy organisations that have not been consulted in the development of this compensation scheme. What undertakings can you give to those members who have been excluded from the discussions to date that they will be able to have input into the shape of this compensation scheme?

Gayle TIERNEY: What I can say in terms of how the park operates going forward is in terms of general community members and youth, in a general sense, the advisory committee that is being established is obviously a point that I have raised, as well as the other mechanisms that are utilised often in cases such as this. In terms of compensation, I think it would be probably best to contact Parks Victoria in the first instance so that there is an understanding about the scope, but it is primarily compensation in relation to reduced or impacted business that would otherwise have taken place if the grand prix was not active.

Georgie CROZIER: If I could just follow on from that line of questioning, will it be Parks Victoria who undertake an audit of these tenants, and do they pay for any audit, or does the business or the sporting organisation or whoever have to pay for it? Also, who determines whether the compensation – is that also Parks Victoria, or is it some other body that is looking to see that the compensation is actually fitting with the nominal loss that a business might be incurring?

Gayle TIERNEY: I think that information will be provided from Parks Victoria. They are close to the ground in terms of who the tenants are. Then of course there will be input from the grand prix corporation. But overall what you are really looking for is DJSIR.

Georgie CROZIER: Sorry, I just could not hear. So it is actually the department of jobs, not Parks Victoria –

Gayle TIERNEY: They will be providing information into it because they are the agency on the ground that really understand at a grassroots level what organisations and businesses are there. And of course the grand prix corporation will be involved in discussions, but primarily what you are seeking is what is the anchor organisation from government, and the anchor organisation is DJSIR.

Georgie CROZIER: So it will be DJSIR that will undertake that audit and ensure that Parks Victoria are doing their work?

Gayle TIERNEY: I think they are still working that through. It is a matter that has only recently been resolved, and it is a matter of working out exactly who is there, but all tenants will receive information and an offer to engage.

Georgie CROZIER: Thank you, and if you could take that on notice and get some time frames, I would appreciate that.

Gayle TIERNEY: Okay.

Georgie CROZIER: That is all from me.

Katherine COPSEY: Minister, I just wanted to get clarity on new section 42AAD(1). This is around eligibility for compensation under the annual compensation scheme, and your amendment states:

An ... Albert Park tenant is eligible for compensation under the ... scheme if the eligible Albert Park tenant has suffered direct losses ...

New section 42AAD(2) states:

An entity is not eligible for compensation under the annual compensation scheme if a lease, licence or other agreement in the declared area to which the entity is a party is entered into on or after 1 January 2026.

Minister, can I get clarity? If a person is a current lease, licence or other agreement holder and has to renew or start a new lease, licence or other agreement post 1 January 2026, is that person going to lose eligibility for compensation?

Gayle TIERNEY: If there are new tenants after the date, they will be tenants that actually know that they have walked into an arrangement where there will be a closure for three weeks, so they will not be eligible, but those that are current tenants would be.

Katherine COPSEY: I just want to understand. So that is intended to bar people who are entering the park after 1 January 2026, and it will not automatically exclude current users of the park who are eligible under the compensation scheme?

Gayle TIERNEY: Can I get some clarity? When you talk about users, are you talking about tenants?

Katherine COPSEY: Yes, eligible tenants as defined under the amendment.

Gayle TIERNEY: New tenants will know in their business plan to work around the three weeks. Those that are currently there are those that are impacted, and they would be eligible.

Katherine COPSEY: I am sorry to be pedantic, Minister. I just want to get an understanding. Hypothetically, we have got an eligible user who has a lease that expires, for example, in September 2026, and they have to renew that lease. Would they therefore be ineligible for compensation with the new lease?

Gayle TIERNEY: If they are a current tenant and it expires, then they will be eligible because it is a rolling continuity of the arrangement and the relationship that they have in place.

Georgie CROZIER: My apologies, Minister, just to seek some clarity: so this compensation is to capture everyone from 1994 to 1 January 2026 effectively for tenants that are currently in the park. If somebody exits on 2 January – I will use The Point as an example, a business down there, a restaurant – and a new tenant comes into that location or any other location in the precinct after 1 January, they will not be eligible for any compensation?

Gayle TIERNEY: That is correct.

Georgie CROZIER: So the current tenants will be provided ongoing compensation, but new tenants will not get it. Why is there the differentiation?

Gayle TIERNEY: Again, as I have said, there is an ongoing relationship in terms of current tenants. If that expires, then they will obviously, if they wish to, re-enter an arrangement, and they would qualify because of that, whereas completely new people and their businesses will know when they go through the whole process that there is an impact on their business for a potential three-week period, and therefore they would not qualify for compensation.

Katherine COPSEY: The Greens will be supporting this amendment, but I am just really concerned that it is not going to adequately respond to the impacts that are being felt by a whole range of park users. For one, it only applies to a quite limited class. The minister has said it is people who basically are already using the park to operate a business. I understand why the government is taking that as a workable definition, but there are a whole range of users that also experience disruption to their civic activities or community activities that will not be eligible, in my understanding, under this compensation scheme. I am also really concerned that it is so time limited. I think that what we have seen over the course of the grand prix's infiltration of this public reserve is that impacts will continue to grow in the future. Basically, the government is saying with this compensation scheme: 'Sorry. If you're coming in in future years, you just have to accept that the grand prix gets its run of the park and the rest of you can go somewhere else during this period and we don't care about the impacts that this big sporting event is going to have on all the other users of this park.' So it is something, and we are pleased to see that the government is acknowledging in this legislation the impacts that the grand prix has on park users, but it is not sufficient. I just want to iterate that we do not regard this as sufficiently fixing the inherent problem with this bill, which is that the government is locking people out of a public reserve for a big corporation's benefit.

Gayle TIERNEY: Well, again, the government's position is that what is being provided here is an advancement on the current situation in terms of the compensation arrangements. I think that there is

significant goodwill to work through these issues with the tenants and those that will be involved in administering the scheme.

New clauses agreed to.

Clauses 26 to 29 agreed to.

Reported to house with amendments.

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Skills and TAFE, Minister for Water) (18:00):
I move:

That the report be now adopted.

Motion agreed to.

Report adopted.

Third reading

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Skills and TAFE, Minister for Water) (18:00):
I move:

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

Council divided on motion:

Ayes (33): Ryan Batchelor, Melina Bath, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Jeff Bourman, Gaëlle Broad, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Enver Erdogan, David Ettershank, Michael Galea, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, Shaun Leane, David Limbrick, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Bev McArthur, Joe McCracken, Nick McGowan, Tom McIntosh, Evan Mulholland, Rachel Payne, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Jaclyn Symes, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell, Sheena Watt, Richard Welch

Noes (5): Katherine Copsey, Anasina Gray-Barberio, Sarah Mansfield, Aiv Puglielli, Georgie Purcell

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 same with amendments.

Statute Law Revision Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Harriet Shing:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Joe McCracken (Western Victoria) (18:03): On the surface, the Statute Law Revision Bill 2025 looks like a tidy-up, tweaking small and technical aspects of various bills and basically harmless. It corrects spelling mistakes, fixes cross-references, updates departmental names and replaces outdated references to Commonwealth tribunals. But here is another interesting part. The fact that we have to amend over 70 acts just to clean up typos and outdated references shows how distracted the government has become – distracted by bureaucracy, obsessed with spin and branding but failing at the core areas of law and order, health, disability, energy and support for regional communities. This bill is not about reform; it is a big, massive spellcheck. And while there is nothing inherently wrong with correcting the many wrongs in the over 70 pieces of legislation, Victorians are crying out for a government that can write legislation that enhances the future, not just fiddle around the edges with spelling and grammar.

We have seen that recently with bail reform and the government's efforts: you need a microscope to see the differences that will be made, they are so small and minuscule. But there are pressing issues around the state that require attention.

Let me begin with justice. This bill updates the Crimes Act 1958 and a range of tribunal statutes. It ensures that references to the old Administrative Appeals Tribunal are replaced with references to the new Administrative Review Tribunal – very neat, very technical. But while the government is busy renaming tribunals, out in our suburbs people are terrified. Families in Kew have faced violent home invasions, shopkeepers across Melbourne have been terrorised by machete-armed youth gangs, supermarkets have had to lock their doors against swarms of offenders and, devastatingly, two young people were murdered in my electorate recently. My heart goes out to the families of the victims. In recent weeks a candlelight vigil was held, and I want to place on record my sincere condolences to the families, friends and the communities of Cobblebank. I also know the impact on the police force members, because I went to Melton and spoke to them myself, and I thank them for their work. This tragic event has rippled through the community like a shock wave. Ask any parent in my electorate what keeps them up at night. It is not whether a clause refers to the AAT or ART, it is whether their children can walk home safely from school, whether their elderly parents can shop without fear and whether our police have the resources they need to keep our streets safe. The government claim to be tough on crime, but the lived experience is so different. Court backlogs are blowing out, bail reform has been massively bungled and the police are under-resourced, left to do less with more. By all means, let us fix the typographical errors in the Crimes Act, but let us also fix the real errors in the state: the errors of judgement by the Minister for Police, who thinks that machete bins are the solution instead of actually hiring more police. 'Victoria – the bin state' – that is the next number plate.

The bill also makes corrections to the Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018. Here again, the government is quick to correct a comma or tidy up a cross-reference, but painfully slow to deliver the care and support that people with disabilities actually need. We have had the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, and its findings were damning. People still wait for respite. Carers still struggle with inadequate support. People with disabilities are still navigating a system that is fragmented and under-resourced. I recently spoke to a parent of a young adult with autism. Their greatest fear is not what happens today but what happens tomorrow when they are no longer there to fight for their child. That fear cannot be corrected by a tidying or drafting of an amendment. It requires genuine reform. I say again: the government can fix all the typos they like in the legislation, but that does not fix the disability system itself.

Then we come to energy and the environment. The bill updates references to departments, replacing the long-forgotten Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries with the shiny new Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. But this is not a reform, it is rebadging. Victorians are not asking for another department with a glossy title. They are asking for affordable power bills. They are asking for reliable energy supply. They are asking for a serious plan that balances renewable energy with stability for households and businesses. But instead, we get endless churn, endless rebranding – a government obsessed with announcing new departments, new divisions and new strategies while families open their electricity bills with dread and open their wallets with less and less and less every time they have got to pay a bill.

Look at the VicGrid legislation. We know that the government hates farmers. They continually punch down on rural and regional communities because the government like to pick on the people they see as a target. No farmers, no food – that should be ringing through the government's ears day in, day out, but the government have used the VicGrid legislation to smash regional and rural communities. People are angry and landholders feel ignored. Even industry is uncertain.

Then whilst at the bush summit in Ballarat, the Premier, with her infinite ability to read the room, said:

... I'm so proud of the work my government is doing in regional Victoria because we know how much it matters.

I can tell you right now she was met with widespread boos. You could not get more tone-deaf comments if you tried. This is a Premier that does not listen and does not care about regional Victorians. She treats them like she treats small business in this state: completely and utterly irrelevant. Small businesses right across the state are paying the price for a confused Premier. They are expected to power the economy on unreliable and unaffordable energy rates. They are crying out for gas, but Labor wants to turn the gas off. The bill will give us neat department names, but it will not give us cheaper electricity, it will not give us reliable energy and it certainly will not give us any climate and environment action, which the government loves to boast about but has not delivered.

This bill also sweeps across health legislation – again cosmetic changes. But Victorians know the real state of health in this state, and it is not good. The Victorian Auditor-General's report on planned surgeries is damning. The government promised 240,000 surgeries under the \$1.5 billion COVID catch-up plan. It has delivered 209,925 – that is 30,000 people left waiting, their lives put on hold. The report found that new public surgical centres, meant to be a flagship reform, were woefully underperforming. Blackburn delivered just 1519 procedures in its first year against a target of 5760. Frankston performed only 6053 against a target of 9000. It is actually scary that the level of underperforming is so happily accepted by the government.

On community health, Infrastructure Victoria has confirmed what frontline workers have known for years: community health centres are neglected. Only 0.3 per cent of the state's health infrastructure budget goes to them. Forty per cent of the buildings are not fit for purpose. I visited these centres. I have seen the staff working miracles in these buildings. So forgive me if I am not excited about the government correcting a misplaced reference to a health statute while thousands of Victorians are sitting on waiting lists, community health centres crumble and our hospitals struggle to cope. I do not even need to mention the report on ambulances, which was absolutely damning, released today.

The bill also touches on agriculture and animal-related statutes – again largely cosmetic. But here is the reality: regional communities are being left behind. Farmers face mounting red tape, rising costs and increased government indifference. Look at the domestic animals legislation. The government has bungled this area time and time again, failing to consult councils and creating frameworks that are cumbersome and ineffective. The latest reforms shift the burden onto volunteer-run rehoming organisations that are already stretched to breaking point. Meanwhile, in regional Victoria communities are crying out for real investment in roads, schools, hospitals and jobs, and instead what they get is another round of departmental relabelling.

Finally, let us not forget the central point that this bill amends over 70 acts. That is 70 acts riddled with errors, inconsistencies and outdated references. Over 70 acts requiring correction because of sloppy drafting, rushed legislation or bureaucratic neglect. This is not a sign of a government that is on top of its brief. It is a sign of a government that has lost control and is not across the detail, a government that lurches from one announcement to the next without proper planning, without proper drafting and without proper consultation. I do not know, maybe we should have another four days of announcements on trains – that might solve the problem.

The opposition does not oppose this bill, but we do support clean laws because they are better than messy laws. But Victorians deserve more than clean laws; they deserve competent government. They deserve a government that can deliver outcomes, not just deliver a spellcheck. So let me conclude with this: the Statute Law Revision Bill 2025 is tidy. It is technical and it is unobjectionable, but it is also a metaphor for the government – a government that is obsessed with cosmetics, obsessed with names and obsessed with process but lacks in substance and deliverable outcomes.

Yes, we support the cleaning up of legislation, but what Victorians really want is a government that cleans up crime, that cleans up health waiting lists and that cleans up the chaos in energy policy. This bill may correct typos, but it will not correct the government's failures, and until those failures are addressed Victorians will continue to pay the price over and over and over again.

Rachel PAYNE (South-Eastern Metropolitan) incorporated the following:

I rise to speak on the Statute Law Revision Bill 2025 on behalf of Legalise Cannabis Victoria.

This bill:

- Is the annual machinery-of-government check of statute books
- Updates a wide variety of acts for grammar, spelling and incorrect references
- Makes sure our laws remain clear, relevant, and accurate.

You’ve got to ask yourself, is debating a bill about spelling and grammar each and every year really a good use of Parliament’s time?

Surely there’s a better way to deal with these kinds of changes that doesn’t use up time and resources that could be better spent passing legislation to improve Victorians’ lives.

To make matters worse, this is all happening at the same time the government claims to have a backlog of 30 bills to pass before the end of the year and is threatening to add another sitting week to catch up.

Yet here we are – using a bill about grammar and spelling as an opportunity for Labor and the opposition to play politics and test out their talking points.

When people look at Parliament and see this kind of behaviour, you don’t have to wonder why trust in government is lower every day.

I will admit I had the same temptation when I saw that this bill amends the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021. I wanted to get up here and talk about the government’s atrocious record on recycling and waste management and their plans to burn our state’s rubbish in giant incinerators.

But I digress, because this government claim to have so much work to do, and while I haven’t seen it yet, I will end my contribution here so they can get on with it.

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (18:15): I move:

That debate on the bill be adjourned until the next day of sitting.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until next day of meeting.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Written responses

The PRESIDENT (18:15): Before I call the minister, I did commit to Ms Crozier to look at *Hansard* for an answer from Minister Blandthorn to her question during question time. Having looked at *Hansard*, I believe that the minister did answer the question.

Adjournment

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts) (18:15): I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

State Electricity Commission

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (18:15): (1975) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for the State Electricity Commission, the Honourable Lily D’Ambrosio in the other place. The action I seek is for the minister to outline how the SEC is powering Victorian government operations in Croydon and Kilsyth, including Gladesville Primary School, Croydon Hills Primary School and Melba secondary college. At long last the SEC is back. Thirty years after the Liberals shamefully sold it off, we are bringing back publicly owned power for Victorians. This means our hospitals, our local schools, our museums and even our traffic lights powered by clean, affordable energy that stays in public hands.

The SEC is not just about electricity, it is about jobs, fairness and our renewable future. It will deliver over 59,000 jobs, including 6000 apprenticeships and traineeships, creating opportunities for Victorians in the industries of tomorrow. And now that the SEC is enshrined in our constitution, it can

never be sold off again. That is certainty for workers and certainty for our clean energy transition. The SEC will also power our trains and trams – more than 350 million trips across the state – making the way we move cleaner and cheaper. Just last week we announced the Metro Tunnel will open in December, and yes, it too will be powered by the SEC – how good is that? This is only the beginning, and soon the SEC will expand to retail offerings for commercial and industrial businesses, servicing 5 per cent of Victoria’s energy consumption, with every dollar of profit reinvested to grow projects and capacity. That is what public ownership looks like: power for people, not for profit.

Community safety

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (18:17): (1976) My adjournment is directed to the Attorney-General, and the action I seek is for the Attorney-General to initiate a royal commission into the operation of Victoria’s courts to ensure that justice in this state serves both community safety and the rights of victims, and clearly sends a message that this abhorrent behaviour by youths, carrying machetes and invading homes to steal, is not going to be tolerated any further. The government owes the community a review of our court system, which is allowing a crisis to continue to be perpetuated, fuelled by lenient sentencing, the manipulation of bail laws and an apparent disregard for victims. The community is losing faith, particularly with the example of a recidivist offender recently granted bail to go on an overseas holiday with his family. This has rightly shocked Victorians. It is sending the wrong message – that offending carries no real consequence – while victims are left to live with lasting harm. As the Community Advocacy Alliance stated:

[QUOTE AWAITING VERIFICATION]

There was a simple and responsible alternative to the argument that the offender had to accompany his family on a trip overseas to visit an ailing relative. Otherwise, they would have had to cancel their trip or leave him on his own.

Why? Wouldn’t it have been fairer to victims to have a government that stands up and does what the community would demand: refuse bail and allow justice to take its course? But no, it is clear by community outcry, crime rate surges and offenders running rampant that our courts have become detached from what the community expects: that our judicial system is there to protect us, the community, the innocent bystanders, and to make dangerous offenders invading our homes accountable for their destructive behaviour. The courts appear to have become fixated on the rights and convenience of perpetrators, while victims are being treated as an afterthought. Their financial losses, emotional distress and physical suffering are compounded by delays, by adjournments and by the failure to deliver timely justice. The government cannot ignore these concerns and calls for action. Whether it wants to or not, the government must respond, not with token measures or clever spin but with genuine reform. Words like ‘tightening bail laws’ or ‘reviewing sentencing practices’ have become euphemisms for doing very little. Victorians are no longer buying it.

We are at a crossroads. If the courts refuse to take responsibility for their own decisions, the government will be forced to intervene and move. That would inevitably erode judicial independence, something no-one desires but something which becomes unavoidable when accountability collapses. Every day, poor judicial choices go unnoticed. These are decisions that quietly undermine community safety and confidence in justice. I understand it is not always possible for courts to get it right, but when we are talking about offenders that continually reoffend constantly getting bailed for the same offences, it is any wonder that crime is escalating and that public trust is – *(Time expired)*

Cyclist safety

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO (Northern Metropolitan) (18:21): (1977) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek from you is an explanation of what urgent and concrete actions you will take to ensure the safety of cyclists is prioritised, such as a safety review in areas where cyclists were killed in the Northern Metro Region. Minister, over the past three months four cyclists have been killed on roads within my electorate of Northern Metro. The most recent of these tragedies occurred just last week in Attwood at the corner of Mickleham and

Bateman streets. Before that, another cyclist was killed in Kensington at the intersection of Macaulay Road and Rankins Road, following a collision with a truck. According to the Transport Accident Commission, TAC, people riding bikes are 4.5 times more likely to be killed in a crash, with most incidents occurring at intersections. The risk is clear, but so is the need for action. Minister, my office has been contacted by constituents expressing growing concern about road safety, especially for vulnerable road users like cyclists. They are asking our office, ‘What are you doing to make our roads safer? Where is the investment in protected bike infrastructure? What is being done to lower speed limits in high-risk areas? How seriously are you committing to Vision Zero?’ Residents across Northern Metro are not just calling for change, Minister, they are demanding your leadership. They want to feel safe riding in their communities to get to work, to visit friends and to go to school and for many other reasons. Minister, cyclists are vulnerable road users, and they should not have to pay with their lives or serious injury for using the roads.

Toy libraries

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (18:23): (1978) My adjournment matter tonight is to the Minister for Children, and the action that I am seeking is an update on how the Labor government is supporting children and families with access to affordable toys. Toy libraries are absolute gems in our community. Around 16,000 families use them every year. Toy libraries provide families with access to high-quality toys to support children’s learning and development, but they are also important community hubs, connecting parents and carers with services and strengthening community and social bonds. Last year I was down doing a shift at the Carnegie Toy Library, which is fantastic. Recently I was down at the Bayside Toy Library talking with them about the work that they do. The Labor government is investing \$1.9 million across Victoria to enhance and expand the existing toy library network so that more children have access to more toys more often. Our children deserve the very best chance to learn and grow, and the Labor government is there to support them.

COVID-19

Gaelle BROAD (Northern Victoria) (18:24): (1979) My question is to the Minister for Health. Professor Brett Sutton, Victoria’s former chief health officer, was interviewed recently by Neil Mitchell and reflected on the actions taken by the government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He reflected on the 262 days that Victoria spent in lockdown. Melbourne had one of the longest periods of lockdown of any city in the world. Given that another pandemic is expected within the next decade, the action I seek is for the government to outline the lessons learned and what, if anything, will be done differently. According to Professor Sutton, there are other ways, rather than the torturous lockdowns, to manage a similar crisis, and wiping surfaces and the use of hand sanitiser were not particularly useful. The lockdowns devastated families, impacted our young people and destroyed businesses. Reflecting on the pandemic and the insights shared by Professor Sutton, is our state prepared for a future pandemic and would the government approach it any differently?

Would the government again impose lockdowns restricting people to their own homes? Would the government again impose time curfews? Would the government again restrict people from travelling a few kilometres from their home? Would the government again close the borders and restrict travel interstate? It is important that Victoria is prepared, and I ask the minister to provide an update on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and the government’s strategy should we face a similar pandemic.

Youth crime

David ETTERS HANK (Western Metropolitan) (18:25): (1980) My adjournment is addressed to the Minister for Corrections. The whole ‘tough on crime’ posturing by our political leaders is damaging and ineffective. While the latest tranche of regressive bail laws, particularly the scrapping of remand as a last resort for young offenders, makes good copy for News Corp audiences, it is always comforting to see the Minister for Police bragging about a 100 per cent hike in youth offenders. We know that these sorts of measures do not make our community safer. Indeed, and perhaps strangely,

the Minister for Police agrees, having recently stated that we cannot arrest our way out of youth crime. If locking them up did work, we would be safer now than were back in the 1990s, because our prison population has virtually doubled since then. The Sentencing Advisory Council has found that Victoria's prison population has grown 62 per cent in the past 20 years, driven largely by the number of people on remand – offenders held in custody without sentencing who have been refused bail. While this might get young offenders off the streets for a short period, it puts them at greater risk of recidivism and continual involvement with the justice system. The council's director Stan Winford observed:

Short sentences can lead to longer term, problematic outcomes in terms of people's lack of access to programs, employment, housing ...

that is, the very things that address the drivers of criminal behaviour and reduce contact with the criminal justice system.

Prison breeds criminals. If you build them, they will most certainly come again and again. Some 61 per cent of people in our prisons have been there before. The most recent surge in offenders on remand, partially attributable to Victoria's new bail laws, might be something that our police minister is pleased to spruik, but it has resulted in severe overcrowding in our jails. This, combined with staffing shortages, has led to more lockdowns in our prisons; an increased risk of assault, sexual abuse and self-harm amongst inmates; and unsafe working conditions for staff. While our prisons are not yet full, with arrests at their highest level, most likely, in Victoria Police's 172-year history, it will not take long. My request is that the Minister for Corrections provide a report on what provisions the government is making for when our prison system is at full capacity.

Housing

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (18:27): (1981) My adjournment today is for the Minister for Planning in the other place. Through the *Plan for Victoria*, released earlier this year, the Allan Labor government has an overall target of 2.24 million new homes to meet a projected population increase to 10.3 million by 2051. In 2025 we have made significant progress on these bold yet crucial targets. As of June this year, over 52,000 homes have been approved for construction, including 10,000 new social and affordable homes through the Big Housing Build. The minister has fast-tracked the construction of over 6000 homes through the development facilitation program, which requires that at least 10 per cent of the homes approved through this pathway be affordable housing, and overall, 10,000 homes have been fast-tracked for construction. Last month Minister Shing also announced the unlocking strategic sites pathway to streamline and fast-track planning processes for underutilised and surplus land in Victoria, and a single-home code announced in August will allow the streamlining of approvals for single homes and small second dwellings on lots under 300 square metres.

In Southern Metropolitan Region plans to build over 7500 new homes close to public transport and services in Camberwell over the next few decades have recently been finalised through the *Camberwell Junction Activity Centre Plan*. Several areas close to train stations in Southern Metropolitan Region have also been announced as planned activity centres, including those in Hawthorn, Kew, Malvern and Prahran. My question to the minister is: how could programs such as the development facilitation program, the unlocking strategic sites initiative and the single-home code be implemented to further increase housing supply, including social and affordable housing, in the electorates of Hawthorn, Kew, Malvern and Prahran?

Albury Wodonga Health

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (18:29): (1982) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is the minister's assurance that the public waiting list for breast cancer surgery at Albury Wodonga Health will not be negatively impacted by the board's decision to terminate one of only two surgeons operating in this very important space.

Dr John Stuchbery has been caring for women with breast cancer in Albury–Wodonga for the best part of 27 years. About eight weeks ago the board terminated his visiting medical officer contract, his VMO contract, which takes effect in just over a month. He says the decision will punish Albury–Wodonga patients. Dr Stuchbery says breast cancer patients will take longer to get an appointment and longer to get the surgery they need. He believes many will have to travel to Melbourne for treatment, and that is completely unacceptable given the government’s commitment to have care closer to home. Albury Wodonga Health has close to 3000 people on the public surgery waitlist. In fact I am told that even category 2 colonoscopies are not getting seen in the 90-day recommended timeframes – it has blown out to 300 days. These waitlists are not only blowing out in time, they are blowing out in numbers. We cannot have women requiring breast surgery waiting for extended periods either. Almost one in four waits for more than a year for treatment, and that is the worst in the state.

The health service is also dumping its public–private partnership at its cancer centre in favour of a purely public model, a centre that is a regional leader in patient outcomes. I have had very good discussions with doctors around the excellent care that the cancer centre provides, and yet this government’s ideological push to take over is not going to have the best outcomes for Victorians in this region. Dr Stuchbery was one of 206 doctors who signed a recent letter to the Prime Minister and Victorian Premier opposing what they say is a flawed project that has now been gutted by cost cutting. On Monday the Australian Medical Association met with senior hospital clinicians, including surgeons, anaesthetists, physicians, and a rehabilitation and staff specialist. It follows the AMA having supported Dr Stuchbery and what has been reported as its concerns about the administration of the twin cities’ hospital set-up. The local border community rightly expects assurances that services will not be compromised by Dr Stuchbery’s termination. The minister needs to tell the people of the border community that not one extra person will be added to the cancer surgery waiting list. She also needs to provide assurances that no more will be gutted from the redevelopment at Albury hospital. In addition to losing the car park, already gone is the helipad, while there are ghost wards, ghost floors and ghost operating theatres that will not be fitted out under the ever-shrinking budget. This is an important issue that goes to the heart of delivering services into local communities, and the minister needs to have those assurances since the VMO contract has been cut for Dr Stuchbery.

Youth mental health

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (18:32): (1983) My adjournment is for the Minister for Mental Health, and the action I am seeking is a statewide strategy for regional adolescent mental health so that appropriate care, including inpatient beds, are available in every region. Mental health issues experienced by young people have steeply increased since 2010. The four leading causes of morbidity and mortality in young people aged 14 to 24 are suicide, self-inflicted injury, anxiety disorders and depressive disorders. Suicide accounts for the highest proportion of deaths in young people 15 to 20, and rates are higher again in rural areas. Rural young people have the highest rates of untreated mental ill health, facing significant access barriers to treatment, including lack of service availability, cost, travel and stigma. Adolescence is the age where many mental health issues arise for the first time, including many of the most serious conditions. Being able to access appropriate care and support at an early stage can ensure better outcomes. The type of support required varies, and there is an urgent need for expansion of holistic, multidisciplinary models of care in different settings.

For some young people, at some points in their lives, the most appropriate place for care may be an acute inpatient hospital bed, yet despite this clear need and rapidly growing demand there are only 58 acute adolescent inpatient mental health beds in the whole state. Astoundingly, only four of these are in regional areas, in Mildura and Traralgon. There are none in the Barwon region in my electorate, despite it being the largest regional city in Victoria and having a new women’s and children’s facility being built. In the Hume region, a \$558 million redevelopment of Albury Wodonga Health will include a 32-bed mental health unit and not a single bed for adolescents. This cross-border region is of similar size to the Barwon region, with a catchment of more than 300,000 people, and Box Hill is the closest facility, which is 3½ hours away. Too often these metropolitan beds are full, leaving

regional adolescents with nowhere to go for what is often a medical emergency. I am not sure we would accept a situation where a young person was denied acute inpatient care for cancer or a diabetic crisis in the same way that occurs for acute mental health crises.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System recommended at least 170 new acute adult and youth mental health beds and that care must be available close to home. This has not happened. I have spoken before in this place about the monumental public health crisis that is occurring in Victoria. Youth mental health remains too low on the priority list for this government, and it is time that changed.

Literacy education

Tom McINTOSH (Eastern Victoria) (18:35): (1984) My adjournment is for the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. The action that I am seeking is for the minister to provide me with an update on the rollout of phonics in Victorian schools and the impact this is having on literacy. Last week I was lucky enough to attend Peninsula Specialist College in Dromana to announce that the school will be receiving high-intensity out-of-school care in 2026. This is a fantastic announcement that was well received alongside the multimillion-dollar new school buildings that will be finished in December. Another thing that came up was the incredible impact that phonics is having at this local school.

Planning policy

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (18:36): (1985) I want to raise an adjournment matter tonight for the Minister for Planning. Last night in Hawthorn, at Glenferrie Primary School, there was a huge public meeting. Ms Crozier and I were both there with Mr Pesutto and a number of other panel members. There is palpable fury at what the state government is seeking to do in the City of Boroondara, in the Hawthorn electorate, in the Kew electorate, in the Ashwood electorate – right across large areas of the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, but in particular in Southern Metropolitan Region. What the government is seeking to do with its planning changes is force high-rise, high-density changes. Many people are concerned about what is going to happen with heritage, and it is true that there were no assurances given at the select committee that was held here to look at the new planning amendments. No assurances were given that heritage would be protected, and I am very concerned that the state government has many of our heritage areas in its gun. It hates many of the suburbs that have long-established heritage. For example, last night I spoke to a man who has got an 1872 home. It is a very significant property. It has a very significant history. But the state government is proposing to put an eight-storey tower right next to him, and that will overshadow his property. It will clearly upset the historic significance of the property, and this is being replicated again and again across the city as the state government's new plans and its new maps and new arrangements come in.

The state government has not understood what is happening with heritage. Heritage Council Victoria made a very powerful submission to our inquiry, and clearly the state government had tried to nobble it at the time. I pay tribute to the work of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria in bringing to the fore some of these issues with planning and the risk to our significant built heritage. What I am wanting from the planning minister is that she meet with the royal historical society and with the heritage council to understand what impact these changes will have on our heritage. We need to have guarantees that nationally heritage listed properties are protected, that state heritage properties are protected and that locally recognised properties have proper protections. At the moment we do not have that. At the moment they are under the gun and they could easily be rolled over. (*Time expired*)

Koala management

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (18:39): (1986) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment. The state government has produced a range of policy documents, such as the *Victorian Koala Management Strategy* of 2023 and the French Island koala management plan 2015–2030. Yet over the break my office was contacted by concerned former government staff who

have witnessed the devastating collapse of koala health and habitat on French Island. They report koalas starving to death in trees with deceased joeys still in their pouches as the island's canopy continues to disappear. These firsthand accounts describe a crisis unfolding in real time, a preventable one that was long anticipated by the government's own management plans.

The 2015–2023 plan explicitly warns that without sustained fertility control, habitat restoration and expert-led translocation the island's population will exceed its ecological limits, leading to widespread starvation and defoliation. By 2025 the plan envisioned ongoing management at sustainable densities, supported by continued monitoring and targeted intervention. Instead, what we are seeing now is ecological collapse.

What makes this particularly distressing is that French Island's koalas were once considered a chlamydia-free insurance population, or a genetic safeguard for mainland koalas if the species ever faced extinction. The loss of this population would be not only a tragedy for animal welfare but an absolute failure of conservation policy and this government. I therefore ask that the minister ensure the French Island koalas receive more ongoing management and fertility control through humane contraceptive programs and that expert-led translocation be prioritised over the unprecedented, cruel and secretive aerial culling such as occurred at Budj Bim earlier this year. The action that I seek is immediate and ongoing rescue operations and for translocation to occur. French Island's koalas are part of our state's natural heritage and a huge tourism drawcard. Allowing them to continue to starve, suffer or be cruelly killed from the air is absolutely unconscionable. Immediate action, transparency and compassion are needed to restore public trust and uphold Victoria's responsibility to protect one of our most iconic species before it is too late.

Police resources

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (18:42): (1987) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Police, and the action that I seek from the minister is multifaceted. I would like (1) the minister to guarantee that the Epping, Mernda, Mill Park and Whittlesea police stations will return to being fully staffed, (2) the minister to advise me of a date when that will be achieved, (3) a guarantee that the Epping station will remain open on weekends and (4) the Mernda station to return to being a 24-hour, seven-days-per-week operation.

In the middle of Victoria's crime crisis the Allan Labor government has cut police funding and has left over a thousand positions unfilled. Now it is planning to close police stations on the weekend because there are not enough police to staff them. I recently spoke in Parliament to raise the matter of Epping station being forced into unplanned closures because of staff shortages. Epping and Mernda stations are operating at only around 50 per cent of their staffing, and Mill Park is even worse, with estimates that it operates at 30 to 40 per cent. This is barely enough for responsive policing, and with only three vans on the road I am informed that there is no proactive policing being done in the police service area (PSA). I have also been informed that the decision has been made to close Epping station entirely on the weekend and only open from 10 to 6, Monday to Friday.

Nearby Mernda station is a relatively new police station, which opened just in 2017 at a cost of \$15 million for a state-of-the-art facility with modern interview rooms and high-security features. Mernda is supposed to be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but when Liberal leader Brad Battin tried to visit the station recently he discovered that it was closed in the middle of the day. The government boasted that the new station would be opened with 45 extra frontline police officers, but they are not boasting anymore. The decision has been made to close Mernda police station on the weekend, and only open from 10 to 6, Monday to Friday.

Further, Whittlesea police station will now be open just two days a week and probably also closed on the weekend. This means that in the Whittlesea police service area, which covers around 250,000 residents, three of the four police stations in the PSA will be closed every weeknight and all weekend because the Allan Labor government will not properly resource and staff Victoria Police.

From 2 November only one police station, Mill Park, will be open to serve the entire municipality on Saturdays and Sundays and every evening of the week. This comes at a time when the latest data shows that crime increased by 28.5 per cent in the City of Whittlesea last year. Even worse, the police officers are telling me that people walk in to report domestic violence in the evening, and these stations will be closed.

Syrian repatriations

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (18:45): (1988) My adjournment is to the Premier, and the action I seek is to know whether the Premier was briefed in advance on the return of ISIS brides to Melbourne, or whether she raised any objections, and why the government or police did not consult affected communities. It has been truly devastating news for many in my community that the ISIS brides have returned to Australia and have returned to Melbourne, with Victoria Police given advance notice of their arrival. I put this: in 2023 then Department of Home Affairs secretary Mike Pezzullo underlined the importance of state governments when speaking about the repatriation of women and children detained in Syria. He told a Senate committee:

... if a state government chose to say, 'We don't want to proceed,' then I would have thought the Commonwealth would take that pretty seriously, because we have to rely on them for schooling, trauma support, counselling, public health support and the like. So it's done consensually.

So now we know, and that means that the Victorian Labor government consented to their settlement back into Victoria. I am calling on the state government and the Premier to explain why they did not oppose the repatriation of these people into Victoria. So many communities in the northern suburbs – like the Assyrian, Chaldean, Syriac, Yazidi, Druze, Alawite, Shia Muslim and other communities – suffered tremendously at the hands of the Islamic State death cult. It is unconscionable that the government would simply settle them back into the state to live amongst the very communities they persecuted out of their homeland without any opposition. It is widely documented, including firsthand, from survivors, who told me that these ISIS brides and ISIS brides in general assisted their husband fighters with the enslavement of persecuted minorities. The Victorian government owe it to the communities that fled their homelands at the hands of Islamic State to explain where in Melbourne these ISIS brides are living; what prosecutions will be made, like there have been in other countries; if they will be entered into any deradicalisation programs; and if these people are being monitored by authorities.

Firefighters enterprise bargaining agreement

Trung LUU (Western Metropolitan) (18:47): (1989) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Emergency Services regarding the firefighters' wage and entitlement negotiations. Bargaining and negotiation for firefighters' wage and entitlements commenced over five years ago between the United Firefighters Union and Fire Rescue Victoria, and an agreement was reached on all matters other than wage and allowance in 2023. Since then all negotiations have collapsed, and it is now with the Fair Work Commission. So the action I seek is for the minister and the Premier to address the firefighters' wage entitlement negotiation after protracted industrial dispute for five long years. The minister is on record claiming that this government respects the workforce and yet has failed to resolve this ongoing dispute or fix other issues, like providing adequate modern equipment for them to fight fires. We have seen what happens with outdated trucks in recent days. Over 40 per cent of the trucks on the road are dangerous, obsolete and out of date. I have raised this concern with the minister on several occasions over the years. This issue was again brought to my attention on my recent visit to one of the local fire stations, and by all accounts no improvement has been made in this space in this time. I understand that over the past three years bargaining has progressed and countless meetings had ensured goodwill until 2023. However, the point is that we are now at the end of 2025 and yet these firefighters still have not received any pay increase and their allowances have not increased. That is not good enough. The government needs to get on with finalising these EBA negotiations, pay the firefighters what they are worth and stop wasting taxpayers dollars on legal fees to firefighters. The firefighters need to be paid a fair day's wage.

Suburban Rail Loop

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (18:49): (1990) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop.

Harriet Shing: Oh, come on!

Richard WELCH: Well, I previously asked this of the Minister for Planning, and she said, ‘No, it’s for the minister for the SRL.’

Harriet Shing interjected.

Richard WELCH: Look, I am going easy on you tonight – I am going easy. The action I seek is over the unfunded and uncosted SRL, which is costing Victorians at least \$34 billion. It will reshape our suburbs and disrupt the lives of tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people. The project plans to change the very nature and character of these suburbs, and my communities are constantly disappointed at a planning process that lacks transparency. In effect the way the government conducts consultation is an abuse of trust at best and corrupt at worst.

The public hearing scheduled for the SRL East precincts standing advisory committee is supposed to be a forum for the public to provide vital input into the future of their communities. In requesting to appear before this forum, many organisations had asked the SRL authority to place all tabled documents from these hearings onto the Engage Victoria or a similar website, which is what happened at the 2022 SRL East environmental effects inquiry. Tabling these documents would clearly allow for a more genuine consultative process and a more worthwhile exchange of views. However, the government, via Planning Panels Victoria, has indicated that it will not happen on this occasion. Why? Because it does not have to, which is different from saying ‘You shouldn’t’ and totally different from saying ‘We are willing to be transparent.’

Make no mistake: consultation conducted while key information is purposely withheld from interested stakeholders is a sham. Communities cannot be asked to provide feedback if they are denied relevant data and details they consider relevant. This is yet another case where the government weaponises the availability of information. In effect it is a lie by omission. It is the government acting in bad faith. There is no integrity to it, and there is no integrity to the process. It is essential that all documents presented at these public hearings, including expert advice and submissions, are made publicly accessible to ensure scrutiny and informed community engagement. The action I seek from the minister is to intervene to ensure that all tabled documents and submissions for the SRL East precincts standing advisory committee are made public and published online on an ongoing basis.

Victoria Police

Joe McCracken (Western Victoria) (18:52): (1991) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Police. I recently had the honour of attending the Victoria Police National Police Remembrance Day in Ballarat with my good colleague here Mrs McArthur. I was reflecting that day on the police I had come in contact with in my electorate and the extremely difficult challenges that they face on a daily basis. Ballarat police recently arrested a teenager for threatening to stab his neighbour with a machete. That teenager was given bail. Officers in Ballarat had to respond to an incident involving a 39-year-old threatening to use a blowtorch to burn down his ex-girlfriend’s house. He was also given bail. When I called into the Melton police station recently and I spoke to the officers, the mood was sombre because they had responded to that awful incident in Cobblebank where two young teenagers were murdered in cold blood. I cannot imagine the horror the police members would have come across and what that scene would have looked like. Sadly, these were not one-off incidents.

Victoria Police have had their funding cut, and the government’s solution to knife crimes in this state is machete bins, while bail laws are nowhere near as tough as what they need to be despite the expensive government advertising campaign on multiple platforms trumpeting the ‘tough new bail laws’ which are neither tough, nor new, nor do they have any real effect. So when I was sitting there

in the church reflecting the other day, thinking about all these things and the police and how they go about their business, I thought to myself, ‘Why would anyone actually want to be a police officer in Victoria?’ There are over 1100 vacancies in VicPol at the moment. Police are already stretched as thin as they can be and working in circumstances that are extremely challenging.

My simple question to the minister is this: Minister, when are you going to start supporting Victoria Police officers by providing them with the resources to do their job and do their job safely? To all our men and women in blue: thank you, thank you, thank you for the work that you do every single day, for protecting our communities and for keeping us safe.

Regional businesses

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (18:55): (1992) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, and it is based squarely on the great work of the Victorian Regional Chamber Alliance, chaired by Jodie Gillett of Commerce Ballarat. With the combined effort of local chambers across the state, their business health survey report is invaluable. It gives a voice to the regional businesses which sustain our towns and communities.

In a way, it feels wrong to be so positive about the report when the subject is so depressing. Just under 40 per cent of respondents said their performance in the last six months was the worst in history – not just poor and not just difficult, the worst in living memory. One business said bluntly:

We are planning to close and sell the land within 12 months and leave Victoria.

Another told the survey:

Some weeks a wage is taken, other weeks a wage simply can’t be taken

Another said:

We take home \$100 each plus ... rent ...

Others spoke of:

Drawing on savings to make it through.

And that:

Having to deal with owing money and stress is at an all time high.

These are not isolated complaints. They are echoed across our state. The report makes clear it is no longer viable to do business in Victoria. For many, after decades of hard work and growth, this is the toughest environment they have ever seen. Why? Because under Labor the cost of doing business has become intolerable. Taxes have multiplied – land tax, payroll tax and the new Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund levy. Even with the cost of compliance itself, one submission said:

The increase in taxes in all areas has just destroyed all profits.

The burden of red tape is crushing. ‘Compliance is overwhelming’, they said. Permits are delayed, insurance premiums are rising and WorkCover costs are soaring, even without claims. Energy prices have doubled, rents have risen with land tax and employing staff is now described as ‘too risky and expensive’.

This report should be a wake-up call to a Melbourne city-centric government that has forgotten the regions. Our communities do not want handouts, they want fair conditions to compete, to hire and to grow. Regional Victoria has everything going for it – ingenuity, resilience and resources – but unless the government restores confidence by cutting taxes, slashing red tape and trusting local enterprise, our best and brightest will continue to shut their doors and move away.

The action I seek, Minister, is for you to read the regional chamber’s business health survey report and to respond in detail to the points it makes. It is time to let the regions power ahead again, not hold them back.

Nursing workforce

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (18:58): (1993) The minister to whom I am addressing my adjournment this evening is the Minister for Health, and it relates to the 2026 graduate nursing program. The action I seek is for the minister to address a problem of this government's own making and fund graduate nursing positions in 2026. In 2023 the government decided to offer nursing and midwifery scholarships to complete a degree. As we all know, nursing is an incredibly rewarding occupation and incredibly valued, particularly in regional Victoria. What the government suggested and did was to create 10,000 scholarships for domestic students to complete an undergraduate nursing and midwifery course. This was for up to \$16,000, and the slogan was 'Making it Free to Study Nursing and Midwifery'. That is all very well and good, but when they come through the pipeline of that degree and then need to apply to, more than often, a public hospital, to finish the grad part of their degree to become a fully fledged nurse and to take on that very important role, which we value so much, there are insufficient graduate positions available. So the government has funded and supported people to do a course that now they cannot actually finish and become a registered nurse. They need that clinical setting, they need that experience and they need that guidance, and we need them, right across this state but particularly in regional Victoria. Hospitals are overstretched and understaffed, as we know.

This government has got a plan. It needs to have a plan for a pipeline to complete that plan and provide that access for students.

The Victorian Skills Authority projected Victoria will need over 59,000 new registered nurses by 2026, with 26 per cent required in regional and rural Victoria. It is an unacceptable and untenable situation for our graduates and future nursing workforce. Thousands of graduate nurses are in limbo at the moment – I have had a number of them contact my office in great distress, wondering what they are going to do next year – and we in regional Victoria need the nurses in our hospitals, serving our people. Minister, will you solve this problem that is of your government's making and fund graduate nursing positions in 2026 and beyond?

Responses

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts) (19:01): This evening we have had 19 adjournment matters for the attention of various ministers in this place and in the other place.

In the interests of sparing colleagues who are in the chamber this evening and those who are no doubt following along at home, I want to outline to Mr Welch the complexity of the issues that he has raised. There is a fair bit in what you have said tonight, Mr Welch. Also, by the way, congratulations on your ascendancy and the portfolios that you have now taken on as part of the current shadow cabinet line-up. I did want to indicate to you that I am very, very happy to provide you with as much information as you wish in terms of the process that has been undertaken and the way in which that aligns with the constant engagement that has been occurring since 2022, when the first sites were occupied off the back of the business case of 19 September 2021, which does outline the process and the planning committee's work as part of the referral by the Minister for Planning. Given the intricate details that were set out, however, in your adjournment, I suspect it would be best for you and best for democracy at large were I to provide you with an answer in writing.

So on that basis, and with your indulgence, President, they are the matters to be acquitted this evening.

The PRESIDENT: The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 7:02 pm.