Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Wednesday 3 June 2026

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Ben Carroll (from 28 July 2026)

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

Daniel Andrews (to 27 September 2023)

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Gabrielle Williams (from 28 July 2026)

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

Jacinta Allan (to 27 September 2023)

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

Jess Wilson (from 18 November 2025)

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

John Pesutto (to 27 December 2024)

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

David Southwick (from 28 January 2026)

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

David Southwick (to 27 December 2024)

Leader of the Nationals

Danny O'Brien (from 26 November 2024)

Peter Walsh (to 26 November 2024)

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Anthony Carbines (from 15 April 2026)

Mary-Anne Thomas (to 15 April 2026)

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury (from 13 October 2025)

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

James Newbury (to 7 January 2025)

Members of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Andrews, Daniel[1]	Mulgrave	ALP	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marsh, Anthony[9]	Nepean	Lib
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren[2]	South Barwon	Ind	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim[10]	Werribee	ALP
Cleeland, Annabelle	Euroa	Nat	Pearson, Danny	Essendon	ALP
Connolly, Sarah	Laverton	ALP	Pesutto, John	Hawthorn	Lib
Couzens, Christine	Geelong	ALP	Read, Tim[11]	Brunswick	Greens
Crewther, Chris	Mornington	Lib	Richards, Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Crugnale, Jordan	Bass	ALP	Richardson, Tim	Mordialloc	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Riordan, Richard	Polwarth	Lib
De Martino, Daniela	Monbulk	ALP	Rowswell, Brad	Sandringham	Lib
de Vietri, Gabrielle	Richmond	Greens	Sandell, Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Dimopoulos, Steve	Oakleigh	ALP	Settle, Michaela	Eureka	ALP
Edbrooke, Paul	Frankston	ALP	Smith, Ryan[12]	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Farnham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden[3]	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will[4]	Ringwood	Ind	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Groth, Sam[5]	Nepean	Lib	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hibbins, Sam[6, 7]	Prahran	Ind	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Werner, Nicole[13]	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Westaway, Rachel[14]	Prahran	Lib
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib
Lister, John[8]	Werribee	ALP			

[1] Resigned 27 September 2023
[2] ALP until 29 April 2024
[3] Sworn in 6 February 2024
[4] ALP until 5 August 2023
[5] Resigned 13 February 2026
[6] Greens until 1 November 2024
[7] Resigned 23 November 2024
[8] Sworn in 4 March 2025
[9] Sworn in 2 June 2026
[10] Resigned 6 January 2025
[11] Died 19 September 2026
[12] Resigned 7 July 2023
[13] Sworn in 3 October 2023
[14] Sworn in 4 March 2025

Party abbreviations

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

CONTENTS

BILLS
Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 1929
Introduction and first reading 1929
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE
Notices of motion 1929
DOCUMENTS
Documents 1929
BILLS
Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 1930
Council's agreement 1930
MOTIONS
Motions by leave 1930
MEMBERS STATEMENTS
John Leslie Foundation 1932
Emergency services 1932
Monash Demons 1933
Motor neurone disease 1933
Benwerren 1933
Worawa Aboriginal College 1933
Emmanuel College 1933
HerMidlife 1934
Sandringham electorate level crossing removals 1934
Stella Maris Catholic Primary School, Beaumaris 1934
Max Williams 1934
Footscray High School 1934
Vehicle registration rebate 1935
Drivers licences 1935
Ripon electorate community leaders 1935
Motor neurone disease 1935
Ehipassiko Buddhist Centre 1936
Yan Yean electorate electricity infrastructure 1936
Glen Iris planning 1936
Mordialloc electorate transport infrastructure 1936
Public transport fares 1937
Endeavour Hills Neighbourhood Centre 1937
Karen Miller 1937
Our Place Morwell 1938
Morwell Gun Club 1938
Visy, Reservoir 1938
Tarneit electorate planning 1938
Vesak 1939
Lalor and District Men's Shed and Whittlesea U3A 1939
Christian communities 1939
Box Hill electorate teachers 1939
Lions Club of Box Hill Silk Road 1939
Ehlers–Danlos Syndromes and Hypermobility Spectrum Disorders Awareness Month 1940
STATEMENTS ON PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORTS
Public Accounts and Estimates Committee 1941
Report on the 2025–26 Budget Estimates 1941
Economy and Infrastructure Committee 1942
Inquiry into the Impact of Road Safety Behaviours on Vulnerable Road Users 1942
Environment and Planning Committee 1943
Inquiry into the Supply of Homes in Regional Victoria 1943
Economy and Infrastructure Committee 1944
Inquiry into the Impact of Road Safety Behaviours on Vulnerable Road Users 1944
Integrity and Oversight Committee 1946
Inquiry into the Adequacy of the Legislative Framework for the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission 1946
Electoral Matters Committee 1946
Inquiry into Victoria's Upper House Electoral System 1946
Public Accounts and Estimates Committee 1947
Inquiry into Fraud and Corruption Control in Local Government: A Follow up of Two Auditor-General Reports 1947

CONTENTS

BILLS
Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026 1948
Statement of charter compatibility 1948
Statement of treaty compatibility 1956
Second reading 1957
Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2026 1962
Statement of charter compatibility 1962
Statement of treaty compatibility 1968
Second reading 1969
Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026 1972
Statement of charter compatibility 1972
Statement of treaty compatibility 1977
Second reading 1979
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE
Program 1990
BILLS
Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026 1998
Appropriation 1998
Second reading 1998
MEMBERS
Minister for First Peoples 2006
Minister for Tourism 2006
Absence 2006
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS
Youth strategy 2006
Ministers statements: early childhood education and care 2007
Youth strategy 2008
Ministers statements: victims of crime 2008
Youth strategy 2009
Ministers statements: economic policy 2010
Firearms regulation 2010
Ministers statements: cost of living 2011
Youth strategy 2012
Ministers statements: early childhood education and care 2013
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS
Kew electorate 2014
Thomastown electorate 2014
Berwick electorate 2014
Pascoe Vale electorate 2014
Mildura electorate 2015
Glen Waverley electorate 2015
Melbourne electorate 2015
Cranbourne electorate 2015
Evelyn electorate 2016
Narre Warren South electorate 2016
BILLS
Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026 2016
Second reading 2016
GRIEVANCE DEBATE
Political donations 2031
Opposition performance 2034
Government performance 2037
Opposition performance 2040
Government performance 2043
Education funding 2045
Government performance 2048
Opposition performance 2051
BILLS
Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026 2054
Second reading 2054
Third reading 2066
ADJOURNMENT

CONTENTS

Hamilton Base Hospital 2067
Mental health services 2068
South-West Coast electorate road maintenance 2068
Bass electorate health services 2069
Narambi Reserve 2069
Werribee electorate roads 2070
Hawthorn Amateur Football Club 2070
St Mary's Primary School, Inglewood 2071
Polwarth electorate tourism infrastructure 2071
Sunbury electorate waste and recycling management 2072
Responses 2072

Wednesday 3 June 2026

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

Bills

Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

Introduction and first reading

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Cost of Living, Minister for Renters, Minister for Men and Boys) (09:34): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012 in relation to forfeiture, seizure and debt collection, the Conveyancers Act 2006 in relation to the suspension of licences, the Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995 in relation to certain agreements to vary domestic building contracts, the Estate Agents Act 1980 in relation to the suspension of licences and the sale of residential properties, the Owners Corporations Act 2006 in relation to payment plans and proceedings, the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 in relation to persons subjected to family violence and personal violence, compensation, keys and security devices, bonds and part 4A parks, the Retirement Villages Act 1986 in relation to the release of entry payments, the Sale of Land Act 1962 in relation to section 32 statements and deposit moneys, the Subdivision Act 1988 in relation to applications to VCAT, the Tobacco Act 1987 in relation to powers to close premises, powers and penalties for commercial landlords and the forfeiture and destruction of illicit tobacco, the Motor Car Traders Act 1986 in relation to the administration of the Motor Car Traders' Guarantee Fund, warranty periods, licences, record keeping and the sale of used motor cars, certain other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:35): I seek a brief explanation of the bill from the minister.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Cost of Living, Minister for Renters, Minister for Men and Boys) (09:36): The bill will deliver on commitments made by the government to improve outcomes for Victorian renters by making renting fairer, more affordable and safer. The bill will also better protect the broader Victorian community by strengthening deterrence and enforcement of the illegal tobacco market.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

The SPEAKER (09:36): General business, notices of motion 37 to 39 and 73, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Auditor-General – Out-of-Home Care Services – Ordered to be published

Owners Corporations Act 2021 – Statutory review under s 210

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Conveyancers Act 2006 – SRs 49, 50

Estate Agents Act 1980 – SRs 51, 52

Owners Corporations Act 2006 – SRs 53, 54

Relationships Act 2008 – SR 48

Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007 – SR 55.

Bills

Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (09:37): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 without amendment.

Motions

Motions by leave

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:37): I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the member for Point Cook for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election and covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:37): I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the member for Eureka for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election and covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (09:38): I move, by leave:

> That this house notes that:
>
> (1) on 4 November 2025 the Victorian Labor government signed a memorandum of understanding with Rolls-Royce to support the defence industry;
>
> (2) Rolls-Royce subsidiary MTU makes Israel's Merkava tanks, which were used in the 2024 killing of six-year-old Hind Rajab and her family, and the majority of Israel's naval fleet, including patrol boats enforcing the illegal blockade of Gaza;
>
> and calls on the Victorian Labor government to end all military ties with Israel, including its MOU with Rolls-Royce.

Leave refused.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:39): I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the member for Ripon for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election and covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (09:39): I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the member for Yan Yean for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election, covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (09:39): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Ashwood for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election and covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (09:40): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Greenvale for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election and covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:40): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Bentleigh for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election and covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:40): I move, by leave:

That I table this document under standing order 176, a document which contains thousands of signatures from local residents in my community –

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Narracan will resume his seat. Motions by leave are not an opportunity to table documents.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (09:41): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Labor-backed member for South Barwon for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election and covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (09:41): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Werribee for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election and covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

Chris CREWTHER (Mornington) (09:42): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Frankston for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election and covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:42): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Bass, the member for Preston, the member for Pascoe Vale, the member for Tarneit and the member for Greenvale –

in the peanut gallery over there –

for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending –

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mildura will resume her seat.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (09:43): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Bayswater for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election and covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (09:43): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Hastings for supporting a Premier who is gaslighting Victorians by pretending to act on corruption while delaying IBAC's follow-the-money powers until after the election and covering up Labor's $15 billion CFMEU Big Build scandal.

Leave refused.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (09:43): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Allan Labor government for failing to staff Clyde North police station, notes the recent violent incident at Clyde North shopping centre and calls on the member for Cranbourne to explain why local families are being left without the police presence their community deserves.

Leave refused.

Brad BATTIN: I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Allan Labor government for failing to staff Clyde North police station, notes the recent violent events at Clyde North shopping centre and calls on the member for Narre Warren South to explain why local families are being left without the police presence their community deserves.

Leave refused.

Brad BATTIN: I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Allan Labor government for failing to staff Clyde North police station, notes the recent violent incident at Clyde North shopping centre and calls on the member for Bass to explain why local families are being left without the police presence their community deserves.

Leave refused.

Members statements

John Leslie Foundation

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:44): We had the end of an era in Sale last week – or perhaps the continuation of an extraordinary legacy. The John Leslie Foundation and its trustees, ably led by Barney Castles and Helene Booth, were honoured at a ceremony marking the winding up of the foundation, fittingly in Sale at the venue that bears John Leslie's name. John was an extraordinary benefactor for the city of Sale, and his legacy will live on in the many civic, cultural and sporting facilities and activities that he contributed to over his 97 years. Since his death in 2016 the philanthropic foundation he left behind has donated almost $14 million – an incredible amount – to so many facilities and causes that his mark is left in virtually every corner of the town and its life. Thank you to the trustees and thank you, John Leslie, for your life of service and generosity and for the gifts that will keep giving for generations.

Emergency services

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:45): The Labor government does not know whether it is Arthur or Martha when it comes to funding for our emergency services. Two weeks ago at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing, the government was asked to provide the budgets for our emergency services agencies. The minister said they could not be provided and we will have to wait until the annual reports are tabled next year. A departmental official said budgets had been set but the government was 'not inclined to release them'. Last night, under pressure, the government has done just that, issuing a media release with a whole lot of figures that in the past we have been told to ignore

because they are not right and each emergency agency's budget changes throughout the year. All this tells us is that whatever Labor says about its big new emergency services tax and funding, it just cannot be believed.

Monash Demons

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (09:46): It has been a big couple of months, and I think it has been a little while since I have had to stand to do a members, so this is in no particular order. We turned on the scoreboard at Jordan Reserve where the Monash Demons play down there, and a shout-out to Peter Willoughby and all of the Monash Demons. This is something that they have been working on for quite some time, and we managed to get some money in the budget. They are one of the fantastic feeder clubs. Several members joined me and the feeder teams to play an MP-versus-feeder game, and I have got to say I was no good. A few of my colleagues were doing all right, though. I managed to take some skin off my knee, but it is growing back; do not worry about that – fantastic day.

Motor neurone disease

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (09:47): One thing I did last year with the Demons was I got dunked in the Big Freeze. Obviously, this week we have had our condolence motion for Neale Daniher – what a giant of our country and a big loss for our country. Bec and I have a family friend Peggy, who is living with MND, and it is such a hard road to go down. So that awareness that the Daniher family have brought and shared with us really cannot be measured. I managed to get the beanie that I wore yesterday from Ashwood High School, who have done their Big Freeze already – and a big shout-out to Ashwood High and all the students down there. I did not have time to do it; I will do it next year if I am here.

Benwerren

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:48): Benwerren was founded in 1951 in recognition of challenges faced by some women and families. Today as many as 24 women and children in need of respite can stay at this rambling rural retreat on the river in Yarra Junction at any one time. The care and support they receive with time out or the school holiday program allows them to take a breather, rest, think and work towards getting back on their feet. Volunteers are critical in keeping Benwerren running, and I am so heartened that many of those who have sought assistance over the years return to give something back. It may take years, but your time will come. CEO Nichole Kelly said mealtimes could become a little bit of a squish, with ambitious plans to expand the dining room then drawn up. The incredible generosity of the volunteers, supported by in-kind product and financial contributions, saw the cost of the project halved and the opening in May. Congratulations to Nichole and her wonderful crew and Trevor and his wonderful renovation crew – job well done.

Worawa Aboriginal College

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:49): Last week I attended Worawa Aboriginal College's 10th annual reconciliation sports carnival – what a wonderful success. More than 700 students from 22 government and non-government schools, many travelling some distance to Healesville, competed in basketball, football, netball, beach volleyball, athletics and cross country. The art on display in Queen's Hall now is from the school, and today proud and likely very nervous students and the school will be visiting Parliament to join with the Parliament of Victoria for a national reconciliation event. Please attend.

Emmanuel College

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (09:49): I want to thank principal Dr Janine Biggin and all those at Emmanuel College for their recent Marianist Day mass, the blessing and the official opening of the Callahan building. There were so many students who were involved in that mass, and associated members of the community: Mark Sciberras; Andrei Tababa; Brianna Ralston; Jorja Grebert; Amalie Haisman; Brianna Ralston – she got another mention, and what a job she did on the day; Tahlia Whear;

Joshua Pilling; Dean Kardas; Isaac French; Ruchelle Jacob; Hans Manansala; Sam Bonser – great to see you again that day; Angelina Le; Zoe Borysiewicz; Alexander Horpinitch; Lucy Cleveland; Blake Gauci; Lucas Bezzina; Isabella Joveska; Father Binh Le, who is becoming a good friend and I am so glad for his support across the community and everything that he does; Isabella Fernandes; Jaedon Panoy-Ducusin; and finally Kaitleigh Manansala, Shirley Dagmang, Victoria Park and Xavier Pilling. It was an extraordinary day and lots of fun. I am so thankful for the invite to be there.

HerMidlife

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (09:50): Finally, on another matter, I just want to mention Dr Archana Singh and HerMidlife. We discussed menopause and perimenopause, the important role that they are playing in our community, the discussion that needs to be more widespread and information that should be shared by all.

Sandringham electorate level crossing removals

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:51): Our community has been let down again by the Allan Labor government, specifically concerning the removal of the Highett Road and Wickham Road level crossings. Before the last election the now Premier and then Minister for Transport Infrastructure promised our community that by 2029 the entire Frankston line would be level crossing free. Since being elected in 2018 I have heard from countless residents who tell me about their safety concerns and general concerns around congestion caused by these level crossings. Interestingly, I have not heard from one resident who has ever asked me for a train line between Cheltenham and Box Hill. These are the residents who are being ignored by this government. This is yet another example of this tired Labor government neglecting Highett, and I believe that our community deserves so much better than that.

Stella Maris Catholic Primary School, Beaumaris

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:51): Thirty-five years ago I started my primary school journey. I know I do not look like I started it 35 years ago, but I did, at Stella Maris primary school, and I joined that school community last week. They were celebrating their 70th birthday. It was a very exciting time for the school. It is now under the principalship of Simon Millar. It is an exciting time for the school. I am sure that they will go from strength to strength. It was great to catch up with my former principal Graeme Spence there as well.

Max Williams

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:52): And finally, I spent a day with the outstanding Liberal candidate for Rowville Max Williams. We attended Scoresby Secondary College, Scoresby Primary School and Karoo Primary School. He is a great candidate, a great local, and it will be a great – *(Time expired)*

Footscray High School

Katie HALL (Footscray) (09:52): I was delighted last week to attend the Footscray High chef's dinner, which was led by Brigitta Clifford, the event leader and VET cookery teacher at Footscray. I would like to thank Josh Murphy and the team from West Footscray's wonderful Harley and Rose restaurant, Jim Key, the Friends of Footscray High School, parents and the VET cookery students Hani Ali, Eli Andrews, Nam Bui, Sean Corsetti, Elise Doloughan Marion, Alexander Donia, Sam Hargreaves, Sophia Hibble, Moth Holliday, Kyra Javed, Alexandria Jeffrey, Jimmy Leafa, Anton Marijanovic, Ty Myers, Zack Park-Nicoll-Clark and Tahlula Whadcoat, as well as the year 9 students who did a magnificent job helping out with serving and clearing plates and decorating Footscray High's campus, and the music students who performed on the evening. It is really a wonderful night every year where the school community gets together and celebrates the talent of our VET cookery students but also the connection to the restaurants in Footscray and Melbourne's inner west. Congratulations, Footscray High.

Vehicle registration rebate

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (09:54): The government's registration rebate has proven to be a huge dud. At the start of the day, when it opened, the website was down. People seeking access could not get online. My staff could not assist the many people who were coming into the office. You need an email to get on the Service Victoria account. Why don't we provide a hard copy so that our senior citizens can apply when they do not have a smartphone and they do not have email access? You have been told time and time again it is a disgrace. We do not think of our senior Victorians when we implement these processes.

Drivers licences

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (09:54): Another mess is the VicRoads medical review process. I have had constituents coming into my office saying they have received the review notice. Listen to this. You think you are running a good ship. They received their review notice –

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, member for Gippsland East.

Tim BULL: sorry, Speaker – after the review due date. One constituent received his notice on 8 May stating his review was needed on 30 April, eight days prior. The letter was dated 2 May, Minister for Police, who is at the table. The letter was dated after the due date, and they are threatening this senior citizen with the cancellation of his licence. This is just sheer incompetence. It is another mess that needs to be fixed, and I urge the minister to get onto it immediately.

Ripon electorate community leaders

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (09:55): I rise to celebrate some remarkable people right across Ripon. It is a real privilege to recognise locals who give so much to our community. To Holly Monro and Dylan West from the Ararat SES unit, congratulations on the arrival of your beautiful twins Kiara Rose and Oliver Graham. To Adele George, well done on becoming controller of the Wedderburn SES unit. It is so well deserved. To Bailey Jarvis and Murphy, two impressive year 9 students, thank you for helping secure $200,000 for a new pump track in Haddon: that is what leadership looks like. To the Friends of the Avenue in Kingston, including Julie Baulch, congratulations on securing another $30,000 from our government to keep your stunning avenue thriving. A very happy belated 80th birthday to my dear friend Margaret Burbidge. Margaret, you are a treasure to our community. To Garry and Julie Higgins, thank you for 30 years at the Parkview Bakery in Maryborough – three decades of early starts, warm smiles and delicious food. Enjoy every minute of your retirement. To Dianne Radford and the Ararat Blue Ribbon Foundation volunteers, outstanding work raising over $100,000 for the East Grampians Health Service at last week's gala. Congratulations to Roxanne Leed and all at St Mary's Primary School in Ararat on your fantastic $2 million school upgrade. And lastly, to Catherine Howison and the Marian College community, congratulations on your new Oak Learning Centre, also backed by $2 million from our government. What a great result for local students and families.

The SPEAKER: The member for Warrandyte will remove the beanie.

Motor neurone disease

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (09:57): There is the Big Freeze at the G, but on Monday 15 June we have got Freeze Parliament on Spring Street, where I will be taking the plunge. It has never been more important or timely to raise awareness and funds for FightMND, particularly after our nation lost a hero in Neale Daniher, a loss we all grieve.

Freeze Parliament was inspired by the incomparable member for Pakenham Emma Vulin, and last year's inaugural event raised over $50,000 for FightMND. I met the member for Pakenham when we were both first-time candidates during an awkward photo shoot for the *Age* where they made us pose like we were in a boy band. We still laugh about it to this day. I have always known Emma to be a genuine, warm, decent and kind person, and today I want to acknowledge her, her partner Matt and

her family for how they have fought the beast with determination and courage in a way that inspires us all. To that end, let us dunk a bunch of our colleagues in a giant ice bath and let us raise a lot of money.

I also acknowledge my dear friends Vonnie and Craig, who lost their brother to MND. Mike Schultz had 2½ years from his diagnosis to his passing. He leaves behind his beautiful wife Robyn and his children Isaac and Audrey. Today we remember him, his life and his legacy. His family shared with me that watching someone you love go through MND is like witnessing a life being taken in increments with no way to stop it. That is the beast. This is why we have FightMND. So please dig deep and donate if you can. For Neale, for Mike, for Emma, may we find a cure for this disease. Play on.

Ehipassiko Buddhist Centre

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (09:58): I want to share that I had a fantastic experience at Ehipassiko Buddhist Centre earlier this week, where they were marking Vesak Poya. Venerable Korathota Dhammadassi Thero led a beautiful ceremony, and the incredible work that had gone into making the Vesak Poya really came to light when they flicked the switch. I was really proud to be part of that. I really want to thank Sinantha Jayatilaka and Erandi Fernando for helping me to make the connection with a growing community in my area. It is so fantastic that people of the Buddhist faith have somewhere to go to express their faith and to share it with their family. I am really glad that they are finding a space in my community where they are welcome to do that.

Yan Yean electorate electricity infrastructure

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (09:59): It has been cold this week, and we continue to have power outages in Wandong and Wallan. AusNet have got works coming down the track, but we need something now. It is freezing. The wind has been whipping through our towns, and to not have power, especially at peak times, makes it unbearable. I call on AusNet to make immediate corrections to our power system.

Glen Iris planning

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (10:00): I rise to update the house on the saga that is 173 Burke Road, Glen Iris. Members might remember that this is a development proposal pushed by Woolworths and their mates Time & Place development. It went to Stonnington council, which knocked it back as being an overdevelopment of the site. It then went to VCAT, and VCAT knocked it back because it was an overdevelopment of the site. But our Minister for Planning stepped in and said, 'Oh, no, I've got a development facilitation program. You can come to me.' It is entirely coincidental that Woolworths has donated tens of thousands of dollars to the Australian Labor Party, I am sure. And then the planning minister came out and said, 'Knocked back by council, knocked back by VCAT, but I will give it a tick.' The big concession was reducing the height of the development from six storeys to five and reducing the number of apartments from 80 to 60.

Well, our old mates at Woolworths have come forward again. They are trying to amend the application yet again. They want to restore it to six storeys, they want to increase the number of apartments and they want to reduce the number of parking spots. Woolworths is a disgraceful corporate citizen. If any whistleblowers would like me to use parliamentary privilege to tell a few home truths about Woolworths, I make that offer right now. But in the meantime, the planning minister cannot approve this disgraceful attempt by Woolworths to go behind the back of the community yet again. Woolworths is an appalling corporate citizen, and I will stand up for my residents every time.

Mordialloc electorate transport infrastructure

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (10:01): The excitement is absolutely blowing through the gates at Mordialloc, as Mordialloc station has finally opened. In 1881 the historic station was opened on the Frankston train line, and we have a brand new station that opened on 21 May. To take the

Premier and the Minister for Transport Infrastructure through was an absolute privilege – to see all of the work that has been done and the hundreds of workers that have been working across the last few weeks of occupation works. It has been just transformational to see the aspiration of our community, to see more level crossings go and to see these upgrades that really transform our area. Station Street, Aspendale, is an elevated rail structure, and so is the Mordialloc train station area. Those open spaces, that connectivity, the shared-use paths and the cycling connections will really set our school kids up for the future. We have still got some delays out there at the moment with a single lane closure of the Nepean Highway southbound. There is still some getting used to how we move around in this space, but this is a legacy piece for Mordialloc and Aspendale. It is something that we committed to doing in the 2022 election that was chastised by the Libs and undermined. They said it was not possible. They attacked Parkdale's elevated rail, they attacked Mordialloc's elevated rail and they have talked down our community. When you find Liberals rolling through Mordialloc, you know they are going to talk down our patch. We have built up the aspiration. We have transformed Mordialloc, the district and the suburbs for the better, and it is because of an Allan Labor government.

Public transport fares

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (10:03): Let us play a game of spot the difference between the states. In Queensland public transport costs 50 cents. In Tasmania public transport is free until the end of the year. But in Victoria on Monday free public transport ended and fares have been put back up. Of course only the public has to pay for public transport now; politicians still have a special Myki for free public transport trips year-round. But free public transport should be for everyone. It is great for people's budgets, it is great for transport emissions, bringing them down, and it takes pressure off traffic for people who still need to drive. In fact when public transport was free for all Victorians, daily trips increased by 20 per cent. Things only seem impossible until all of a sudden they are not. All it really took was switching the Myki readers off. The problem is Labor chose to switch them back on. The Greens know that we could switch them off and leave them off for good if we made the big corporations, the big banks, the big gambling companies, the big fossil fuel giants pay their fair share of tax. Then we could put that money into the things that we all need to live a decent life: free public transport, more buses, more train services, more renewable energy and more public housing. We could have these things if Labor had the guts to make the decisions that benefit Victorians.

Endeavour Hills Neighbourhood Centre

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:04): I had the pleasure of attending a wonderful community event recently at the Endeavour Hills Neighbourhood Centre, where I was joined by the Premier for the Biggest Morning Tea. This much-loved annual event brings people together to support the Cancer Council and raise vital funds for cancer research. Cathy and Kitty and their amazing team did a great job in organising this fantastic event, bringing their own china plates and cups, and a turnout of local residents, volunteers and community groups all united to share in this wonderful, extraordinary event. Events like the Biggest Morning Tea remind us of the strength of our community when we come together for a common cause, and I am really proud to represent a community that shows such generosity and care.

I also want to do a huge and special shout-out and congratulations to Jean on her 20 years of service at the Endeavour Hills Neighbourhood Centre. Jean is well known for her welcoming smile at the front reception and is always there at the centre to bring about happiness and give everyone the right direction in what they need. She is the heart of the local community. We thank you, Jean, so much for your incredible service and for always making the centre feel so warm and welcoming.

Karen Miller

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:05): I also want to do a huge congratulations to Karen Miller, who won my Volunteer of the Year Award at the Narre Warren seniors centre. Karen is an exceptional volunteer who is always there to help and assist everyone, whatever it takes. We thank you, Karen, for your service.

Our Place Morwell

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (10:06): A few weeks ago I had the privilege of visiting the Morwell Central Primary School and as part of that seeing how Our Place Morwell works. It was great to see what is possible when schools and early learning, health and community services work together in one place to support families. This has made a huge difference to the people in Morwell and especially the people at the Morwell Central Primary School. Families are now engaging with Our Place for their children's journey from health care and early learning right through into our system of primary school. A big thankyou to Narelle, Elfie and Jen for showing me around to just see when we get programs right how much they do benefit the community. Well done to Our Place, and I look forward to returning there at another time.

Morwell Gun Club

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (10:07): Also we had the official opening of the Morwell Gun Club Olympic trench range over the weekend, and I caught up with Ken Balcombe and his wonderful volunteers out at the Morwell Gun Club. This has a clay-shooting target which is a world-class facility. It is the only one between Melbourne and Canberra. Well done to the Morwell Gun Club. It was great to see so many participants.

Visy, Reservoir

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (10:07): We have been out doorknocking homes near the Visy recycling plant on Radford Road, and I would just like to put on the record a few further points about the odour issue affecting some residents up there. The first is that Visy have made significant changes to that plant in response to residents' complaints and action by our government's Environment Protection Authority Victoria. You can see the extended stacks on top of the plant. You can go inside and see the changes to ventilation systems, the bacteria control, the recycled water and so forth, and most residents do agree that things have improved. But a second very important point is that just because things have improved does not mean Visy is absolved from its continuing obligations under our Environment Protection Act 2017. There is still a smell there. I have smelt it myself. Admittedly, different residents have different levels of sensitivity to that smell. Some people do not think it is a problem but some people still think it is, and everyone has a right to enjoy their home free from offensive odours. I thank the minister and the great team at the EPA for their continued attention to this issue. I understand that EPA scientists were down there very recently having some further conversations. Visy are a very large, very wealthy organisation, and we certainly look forward to some further action taken by them to ensure that we have fresh and unpolluted air across that part of Reservoir.

Tarneit electorate planning

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (10:09): It was a pleasure last week to be joined by the Minister for Planning at what should be the intersection of Polly Parade and Derrimut Road and what should be an intersection that sits inside the *Tarneit North Precinct Structure Plan*, a precinct structure plan that was dreamed up and mocked up by former Minister for Planning Matthew Guy and some local developers, of course, and signed during caretaker in 2014 – a precinct structure plan that is so poorly planned and with a developer contribution plan which is so horrendous that the residents of Tarneit North have ended up inside of an estate with dead-end streets that they cannot move around and that you cannot get a bus route through. But it is back to the future – more of the same under Jess Wilson and the Liberals' housing plans –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Titles.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am not taking a point of order. The member is to sit down.

Vesak

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:10): It was a great honour to attend the Quang Duc Buddhist monastery with the member for Broadmeadows Kathleen Matthews-Ward to celebrate Vesak on Sunday. Thank you to the Most Venerable Thích Thông Mẫn and also Senior Venerable Thích Nguyên Tạng for the kind invitation. Vesak is the most sacred and significant celebration in the Buddhist calendar, honouring the birth, enlightenment and passing away of the Buddha. The Victorian community celebrates this each year in a spirit of peace, compassion, harmony and mutual understanding – teachings that we could all learn from. It was a wonderful day with celebrations, delicious meals and great company.

Lalor and District Men's Shed and Whittlesea U3A

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:11): I would also like to congratulate the Whittlesea U3A and the Lalor and District Men's Shed. I was down there on Monday, and we were celebrating the fantastic state government purpose-built building that now houses the U3A and men's shed programs. The Whittlesea U3A does incredible work, in particular providing training to seniors around digital technology, and the men's shed is a wonderful place, bringing people in for practical skills, fundraising and great connections within the community. Congratulations to both, because these programs are so important.

Christian communities

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (10:12): It was an honour to join many leaders and members of our Christian communities from across the state at the Victorian Christian communities dinner recently. The event was a wonderful opportunity to recognise the immense contribution of our Christian communities. It was a true illustration of our state's diversity too, with representatives from various faiths in attendance that evening, including Catholic, Protestant, Baptist, Uniting Church, Orthodox, Anglican, Assyrian, Lutheran, Presbyterian and many others. Those attending represented not only many Christian faiths but many nationalities and languages too. Everyone was united by the importance of faith, service and compassion for our communities.

Our Christian communities contribute much to our state, and I see this work every single day in my electorate of Narre Warren South. Not only do they give those who observe faith a place to gather, worship and connect, but their work across schools, hospitals, aged care facilities and charitable organisations is often part of people's daily lives. Our Christian communities also do important work supporting those in need of crucial assistance, including vulnerable families, those struggling with housing, those experiencing financial instability, refugees and asylum seekers. It was great to be joined at the dinner by local Christian leader Reverend Robert Elkhuizen from Hampton Park Uniting Church. This church does so much good work in the community. I thank the Premier for hosting such a wonderful event.

Box Hill electorate teachers

Paul HAMER (Box Hill – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Corrections) (10:13): Congratulations to three very special teachers in the Box Hill electorate who have recently been acknowledged for their exceptional length of service. Congratulations to Marilyn Eaton from Box Hill Senior Secondary College and Christopher Ondaatje from Blackburn High School for 40 wonderful years in the teaching service, and an even bigger shout-out to Kathleen Costaras at Orchard Grove Primary School for 50 amazing years.

Lions Club of Box Hill Silk Road

Paul HAMER (Box Hill – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Corrections) (10:14): Congratulations to Wendy Yang and all of the volunteers at the Lions Club of Box Hill Silk Road for organising the 5-kilometre park run and walk to raise money for Cancer in

Kids auxiliary on Sunday 30 May. It was wonderful to see over 200 participants from across the Box Hill community come out and support this very worthy cause.

Ehlers–Danlos Syndromes and Hypermobility Spectrum Disorders Awareness Month

Paul HAMER (Box Hill – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Corrections) (10:14): May was Ehlers–Danlos Syndromes and Hypermobility Spectrum Disorders Awareness Month, and I want to take a moment to talk about these debilitating conditions that many people may never have heard of. The Ehlers–Danlos syndromes are a group of genetic conditions affecting the body's connective tissues. Symptoms vary but can often include hypermobility across multiple systems, chronic pain and significant fatigue, amongst others. Unfortunately, the lack of understanding of their impacts, their perception as only rare diseases and insufficient education being included in healthcare professional training have contributed to underdiagnosis and misdiagnosis of affected individuals. As a result, for many disease management is rarely optimised and opportunities for early intervention are not realised. This means that many sufferers lose decades of their lives trying to get diagnosed.

Nicole Werner: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I am just seeking your clarity around a ruling during my genuinely bipartisan statement about FightMND and raising funds. The Speaker had me remove my beanie, when yesterday during the condolence motion every Labor MP had either a beanie or a hat on in support of FightMND, as I was seeking to do myself in my members statement – including the Speaker herself. I would like to seek guidance on the ruling and about the rules for thee but not for me and genuinely what was a bipartisan moment that has sadly been politicised. I would like to seek clarity on that, especially where it appears to be rules for thee but not for me.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. I would encourage you to speak to the Speaker in her office. More than that, that is not a point of order.

James Newbury: On a further point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member, I heard, was seeking your clarity, and if you are saying that you will refer it to the Speaker, of course you are welcome to do that. But this house is a place where members can stand up and seek clarity and raise points of order. It is not, respectfully, a place where we can get told to go and have a cup of tea with someone else. The member, as I heard it, was seeking clarity. It is fair and reasonable that, as the member is seeking clarity, that matter is referred to the Speaker, because the Speaker herself was wearing the item yesterday, and the question –

Members interjecting.

James Newbury: I presume you do not just support it on one day for the picture.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet. Members will be removed from the chamber. As I have ruled, and my understanding is the Speaker made a ruling, it is not a point of order to necessarily question the ruling of the Speaker. However, the Speaker would be more than happy, I am sure, to discuss the matter with you in her office.

Cindy McLeish: On a further point of order, Deputy Speaker, it has been mentioned during this discussion just now that yesterday leave was sought, and we would like to have that clarified, because we did not hear leave being sought or know about leave being sought.

Belinda Wilson interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Narre Warren North can leave the chamber half an hour.

Member for Narre Warren North withdrew from chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: 'Leave was sought' – I am not sure of the leave you are talking about.

A member interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please do not reflect on the Chair. I encourage you to speak to the Speaker about the issue. Further to that, we will continue on committee reports.

Gary Maas interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Narre Warren South, I am over the interjections.

Kathleen Matthews-Ward interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Broadmeadows can leave for half an hour too. Anyone else?

Member for Broadmeadows withdrew from chamber.

Statements on parliamentary committee reports

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2025–26 Budget Estimates

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (10:18): I rise this morning to make a contribution on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee outcomes hearings from late last year. I thought it was important to have a look at these outcomes because as a newly appointed – reappointed – person to PAEC I had good reason to listen to the current Minister for Housing and Building's assessment of the coming budget and what was said in there, but I thought it was worthwhile to go back and see whether the government had in fact addressed any of the issues that they were encouraged to by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I went back, and it was quite depressing reading, really, because the government have not only failed to take heed of some of the very sensible recommendations but in fact ignored them and have been doing so for quite some time. I would like to read into *Hansard* just a couple of the recommendations – recommendation 24, for example, on page 115:

> The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing work toward gathering and publishing better data on the demand for homelessness services and changes to the homeless and at-risk populations in Victoria.

They have made that recommendation because there is no publicly available data from DFFH that estimates homeless or at-risk people in Victoria. This government have made much of the amount of money they are spending, but as we have learned throughout this year, just because the Allan Labor government say they are spending money on an issue does not mean taxpayers are (a) getting good value, (b) getting what they think they are paying for and (c) actually having a problem solved that they want solved. We can look at lots of examples. The most critical one of course is the corruption that has been rife in the Big Build. When the government say they are spending money on an issue but cannot demonstrate any meaningful figures to prove that the money is going to a good cause, then we have a problem.

I would also refer to finding 59, which says:

> In 2023–24, 34.4% of specialist homeless sector clients who had a need for accommodation were not provided it or referred to another service for accommodation. Seventy per cent of clients who needed long-term housing were not … referred to another service.

We also know that, throughout this alleged Big Housing Build to address the homelessness issue, here in Victoria the rate of homelessness has continued to skyrocket. I refer to a couple of figures. One is the homelessness figure that was most recently published; it is the highest it has ever been. We continue to reach new record highs in homelessness while the government says it is addressing the problem. Finding 61 in this same report says:

> While the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing supported the Committee's recommendation to publish long-term data on social housing allocations, applications and wait times … it has not yet done so.

It continues to not publish long-term, meaningful data on waiting lists and homelessness in Victoria. The reason this is important, and I will highlight it again, is that as of today 57,372 families – so that is well over 100,000 people – do not have a home to go to. If we had long-term data, we would add

another 10,578 families to that list. This government chose about two years ago to sneakily take about 10,000 people off the list and reclassify them. If we were actually looking at genuine long-term data over the course of this current government, we would see that the homeless waiting list has more than trebled in the term of this Labor government since 2014. It is an indictment on any First World society that homelessness could be in such a bad way and that a government could deliberately and trickily alter the data and the recording of it in order to continue to disguise the problem. The Parliament goes to the effort, through the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, to actually make recommendations to provide better data and more information to the community, and yet the current and previous housing ministers here in Victoria have refused to adopt that commonsense approach to letting people know what the situation in Victoria is.

Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Inquiry into the Impact of Road Safety Behaviours on Vulnerable Road Users

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (10:23): I rise to make a further contribution on the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's report on its inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users. I continue to draw the respective ministers' attention to the 61 findings and 56 recommendations that were set out in the report and that are all about making our roads and streets safer and our transport system more sustainable. I draw the house's attention to recommendation 3:

> The Victorian Government continue to invest in public transport to make it a more attractive option …

to get more people commuting sustainably. In that respect I commend the free public transport initiative that we introduced over April and May and the half-price public transport that will now be in place between June and the end of the year, which will save people hundreds of dollars for the remainder of the year and continue to encourage that record patronage that our buses, trains and trams have continued to experience.

It is also why I welcome the ongoing investments we are making to particularly improve the Craigieburn and Upfield rail corridors through the Metro rail tunnel to create that new capacity in the city loop to help support and facilitate more services now and over the coming years; the removal of level crossings through Coburg – we have already removed four, at Moreland Road, Reynard Street, Munro Street and Bell Street – to make those roads safer as well; the eight further level crossing removals we have committed to delivering through Brunswick by 2030 at Park Street, Brunswick Road, Union Street, Dawson Street, Albert Street, Victoria Street, Hope Street and Albion Street; the new 20-minute weekend services that we have introduced, down from every 40 minutes, which are largely now implemented; the commitment to new 20-minute weeknight and evening services to reduce that period down from every 40 minutes; the new timetable that is being rolled out from the middle of this year to continue improving those local services; and the $7 million business case that will continue to support essential planning for future upgrades, namely for the Upfield line. This budget contained $3.6 million of state investment towards that business case, which is exploring for the various northern rail corridor lines – the Craigieburn, Upfield and Mernda lines, but particularly Upfield – opportunities around duplication, extension, further level crossing removals north of Bell Street and other necessary upgrades that we need to introduce to continue to improve particularly peak services along the corridor.

Notwithstanding these improvements we are making on the Upfield line, we must continue to do more, especially to mitigate service disruptions and things like short shunting because they impact lives and families. This email I received from Simone on 2 February following an unforeseen service disruption I think best crystallises those impacts. She said:

> Today my daughter started her first day of high school. She has spent months planning her route to school and calculating the times she needs to wake up, get ready, and leave for the station to get to school on time. Imagine our family's frustration today when her 7:17am train from Merlynston to Parliament was cancelled. She waited nervously on the platform for the next train at 7:33.. which was also cancelled.

> We have four kids with two working parents, so today we all had to do a mad scramble to arrange different parents to take different kids to their respective schools for their first days and rearrange work, as a result of the train cancellations. I had to take my toddler to Carlton in peak hour traffic to drop my daughter off at her first day of high school. My husband had to return from the train station and drive the primary school kids to Hadfield, then work from home instead of the office, which meant starting later and consequently having to finish work later tonight.
>
> …
>
> We have been living in Merlynston for 18 years, working and paying taxes. I assume there is a plan of action to improve the rail network in the area.
>
> Please advise what the plans are to improve train reliability from Merlynston to the CBD in the future.

That is exactly why we are continuing to invest to improve the services, accessibility, quality and frequency on the Upfield line – for Simone, for her four kids and for all local families. It is only Labor that will continue to invest to improve the Upfield rail corridor.

Again I draw the house's attention to recommendation 3 about investing in public transport. In the state budget we recently invested a record $100 million boost to improve bus services across the state, including in my local community, which headlined the bus announcement. The 526 bus route from Coburg through to Newlands will move to seven-day services, including on Sundays for the first time, with 20-minute average frequencies. The 508, Alphington to Moonee Ponds via Brunswick West and Victoria Street – the member for Northcote advocated strongly for more frequent services – will increase to every 15 minutes in weekday peak and weekend services will double to every 20 minutes, and it will run later via extended services to midnight Monday to Saturday. The 503 bus route, Essendon to East Brunswick via Albion Street, will be boosted by an extra 25 weekly services, delivering consistent 20-minute weekday frequencies outside of the peak times, with improved connections to Craigieburn. We still have to get that happening on Sundays as well, though. The 561 bus route, Pascoe Vale station to La Trobe University, will have increased weekday peak and weekend frequencies. The 542 bus route, Pascoe Vale station to Roxborough Park – the member for Greenvale is here as well; this will benefit him – will have a full service uplift from Monday to Saturday, and the Sunday service will be extended to 10 pm. We are taking real action to improve public transport across our community.

Environment and Planning Committee

Inquiry into the Supply of Homes in Regional Victoria

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (10:28): I rise to speak on the Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee's report on the inquiry into the supply of homes in regional Victoria, which was tabled in November 2025. This was an important inquiry that examined one of the most significant challenges facing regional Victoria today: ensuring that people can access affordable, appropriate and secure housing in the communities that they call home. The committee received 118 submissions, conducted public hearings across regional Victoria and ultimately delivered a report containing 12 findings and 34 recommendations aimed at increasing housing supply and improving housing affordability throughout regional communities.

The inquiry found that demand for housing in regional Victoria continues to outstrip supply, and there is no surprise there. Population growth, migration – also from metropolitan areas – changing household structures and increasing housing costs have combined to place significant pressure on regional housing markets. Rental vacancies remain extremely low in many communities, while the cost of purchasing a home has placed home ownership beyond the reach of many young families and essential workers. The committee highlighted the need for greater investment in social and affordable housing. Housing providers also highlighted growing waiting lists.

We know that homelessness figures continue to rise significantly in regional communities. The report calls for a sustained pipeline of social housing investment to support vulnerable Victorians and reduce pressure on the private rental market. Recommendation 32 calls on the Victorian government to work

with local governments, community housing providers and social service organisations to establish clear targets for the construction of new social housing that actually reflects projected demand across both metropolitan and regional Victoria. Recommendation 33 calls for the development of a dedicated 10-year investment plan to increase social housing across regional Victoria, including both public housing and community housing, supported by long-term funding streams specifically targeted to regional and rural communities. Importantly, recommendation 34 recognises that housing is about more than simply building homes. It recommends increased funding for community housing organisations and social service providers to deliver wraparound support services, homelessness prevention programs and early intervention measures for vulnerable Victorians.

These recommendations are particularly important in regional communities, with the scale of demand, where waiting lists remain high and where many people are struggling with the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Access to affordable housing is not simply a housing issue. It affects health outcomes, educational opportunities, workforce participation and community wellbeing. The report found that while regional Victoria continues to experience strong population growth, housing supply is simply not keeping pace with demand. This is driving up rents, increasing house prices and making it harder for families, workers, young people and older residents to find suitable accommodation. The committee also highlighted the need for greater housing diversity. Regional Victoria has traditionally been dominated by detached family homes, yet demographic trends show increasing demand for smaller dwellings, units, townhouses and accessible housing suitable for older residents wishing to downsize and remain within their communities. The committee rightly recognised that sustained long-term investment in public, community and affordable housing will be critical if we are to address housing insecurity and reduce pressure on the private rental market.

One of the strongest themes of this report is that housing supply cannot be left to the market alone. The committee heard clear evidence that regional communities are facing rising rents, increasing cost-of-living pressures and significant shortages of affordable and social housing. The report recognises that sustained investment in public and community housing is essential if we are to provide secure housing for families, key workers, older residents and vulnerable Victorians. It also acknowledges that without infrastructure, workforce capacity and planning certainty regional Victoria will continue to struggle to meet growing demand.

I was also pleased to see the inquiry recognise the importance of construction workforce shortages across regional Victoria. The committee made recommendations aimed at addressing skills shortages within the building and construction sector and supporting innovative building methods that could improve housing delivery in regional areas. These measures recognise that increasing supply requires both planning reform and a workforce capable of delivering new homes efficiently and affordably.

One of the most valuable aspects of this inquiry was hearing directly from regional Victorians. Many community organisations spoke of the increasing number of people experiencing housing stress, homelessness and difficulty securing rental accommodation. I wish to acknowledge the committee's work and my colleagues the member for Morwell, the member for Narracan and the member for Croydon for their work in regard to this important inquiry.

Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Inquiry into the Impact of Road Safety Behaviours on Vulnerable Road Users

John LISTER (Werribee) (10:33): Doing a mono down Synnot Street on an e-bike does not make the rider tough, it shows how dumb they act. I would like to return to a report that I have explored previously but that I know is of significant interest to my community in Werribee. The inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users explored a range of issues, but there are two matters that the committee reported on in its findings that I wish to focus on.

Not too long ago I attended a rescue call with Werribee CFA, with a person trapped under a car. I raced out of my electorate office and jumped on the pumper. We were the first road crash operators

on the scene. I am very careful about what I talk about when I am acting in my capacity as a firefighter, and there are details it would be inappropriate for me to reveal about the incident. However, it was widely reported that the individual stuck underneath this car was riding a modified bike with an electric motor. This is not the first incident I have attended involving a motorised bike, in particular an e-bike. I would like to thank the crews from pumper 57 who were there on the day for helping with the rapid extrication of this patient. We got him out in probably 5 minutes. It was one of the most amazing rescues I have seen for a long time in that sense.

The committee, at the time when they were looking into this, went to issues surrounding e-scooters, but I believe the issues they grappled with extend to other personal mobility vehicles. There have been reports of a 400 per cent increase in ED presentations for e-bike-related incidents and, unfortunately, some tragic deaths. Finding 46 goes to the fact that regulations have not kept up with the growing popularity of e-scooters. Finding 48 goes to the general lack of understanding about road rules relating to e-scooters and other micromobility devices among Victorians.

Just like with other MPs, the issue of e-bikes is raised regularly with me. People are concerned about their proliferation and the need for more enforcement around road rules. With this most recent incident I attended as a firefighter, my resolve has been strengthened to advocate for more work in this space. I acknowledge the state government's response to the inquiry findings and recommendations in this regard. There is work being done around education and awareness of the risks associated with these vehicles. In the government's response they also raised the issue of border control and consistent rules around Australia in response to the proliferation of these vehicles, saying that:

> Victoria will continue to advocate to the Australian Government to use import restrictions to limit the availability of e-scooters … which are illegal to use on public infrastructure throughout Australia.

Many people in Werribee would have noticed an increase in e-bikes over the last few years. As a high school teacher I used to see many kids coming to school on e-bikes that definitely did not look like they were able to go under 25 kilometres an hour – very much hotted up.

How did these people get these e-bikes, and what adult is responsible for letting them still ride them? To the first question, reporter Ben Knight offered some interesting insights into the changes made in an article in the ABC on the weekend. In 2021 then Nationals minister and now One Nation turncoat Barnaby Joyce and his assistant minister Kevin Hogan made a very quiet – you could say silent – change to importation standards for e-bikes. These changes saw a spike in the number of e-bikes that did not meet our road rules being imported. Barnaby Joyce and his offsider have not provided a reason for this change. This morning I wrote to the One Nation member for New England asking him to please explain. I thank our federal MP Joanne Ryan for pursuing this and recognise that the federal Labor government has reversed this decision by Joyce and Hogan and we are seeing more restrictions at the border.

To return to the committee report, recommendation 16 goes to reporting of dangerous behaviour on the road. Members of the public should continue to report illegal e-bike riding to police. If it is a risk to life, call 000. If it is not an immediate risk, contact Crime Stoppers, as it helps local highway patrol gather evidence and target their patrols around particularly problematic areas. To address this concerning behaviour all agencies need to continue to work with the community, because micromobility is a good thing but we need to make sure that it is safe and that what is coming over our borders is meeting standards for our roads. I do not want to go to another incident where we see someone who was on one of these vehicles underneath a car or in a worse state than we found this person in. I commend the committee's report and look forward to continuing to work in the government on this issue.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Inquiry into the Adequacy of the Legislative Framework for the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission

Tim READ (Brunswick) (10:38): I rise to speak on the Integrity and Oversight Committee report into the adequacy of the legislative framework for IBAC. St Augustine famously prayed, 'Oh, Lord, make me chaste, but not yet,' and so it goes with the Allan Labor government and integrity reform. Earlier this week the government released its response to the committee's report on how to strengthen IBAC, and the government so far is committing to absolutely nothing. While the government's response agrees in principle with most recommendations, we know from past experience that 'in principle' means something between 'yeah-nah' and 'maybe, but definitely not before the election'.

Today I want to focus on just the first recommendation of the report: that the government broaden the definition of 'corrupt conduct' in the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 so it can investigate corrupt conduct beyond just serious indictable or common-law criminal offences. Under current laws IBAC cannot investigate serious corrupt conduct where it is not also criminal. This includes, as alleged in the Big Build scandal, things like union infiltration by outlaw motorcycle gangs and a black market where labour hire firms paid bribes for EBA endorsements. This includes the majority of matters the Premier referred to IBAC in 2024. Much of this conduct is not illegal or indictable, yet it may have cost Victorians billions.

IBAC's lack of powers has served the Allan Labor government well, allowing the Premier to cynically hide behind her referral of Big Build allegations to IBAC – that is, until IBAC called her bluff. So I remain unconvinced that the Premier will give IBAC the powers it needs to comprehensively investigate how the missing Big Build millions were lost. But I have a question for the Leader of the Opposition, who so fiercely called out the Premier for hiding behind her sham IBAC referral and who said, 'This government knows no bounds when it comes to covering up corruption.' Does the opposition now commit to expanding IBAC's powers so it can investigate the full scope of what this Premier seems so determined to conceal? The Liberals voted against the Greens amendment giving IBAC these powers earlier this year, so Victorians, and the Greens, look forward to hearing from the opposition leader.

Electoral Matters Committee

Inquiry into Victoria's Upper House Electoral System

Tim READ (Brunswick) (10:41): I also wish to briefly mention the Electoral Matters Committee report into Victoria's upper house electoral system, specifically recommendation 1, again, which reiterates an earlier call by the committee on the government to introduce legislation eliminating group voting tickets as soon as possible. The government's response was due this week, but we have yet to see it. The *Guardian* reports that the Premier may be reluctant to scrap them, fearing that this could benefit One Nation. If true, that concern is based on a misconception. I draw members' attention to a recent article by psephologist Dr Kevin Bonham, who notes that the myth of group voting tickets blocking One Nation goes back to the Howard era, when major and minor parties alike put One Nation last. But that was then and this is now. Today in Victoria there are enough right-leaning micro-parties willing to direct preferences One Nation's way. We saw it at the last election in 2022, when One Nation's Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell won in Northern Victoria with just 3.7 per cent of the vote, overtaking four parties with higher primary votes, including Labor. Group ticket preferences from Druery-aligned parties elected her. The vast majority of parties in Glenn Druery's network preference One Nation ahead of Labor, the Liberals and the Greens. But, as Bonham notes, the right question is not: will scrapping group voting tickets will help One Nation? The right questions are: will it give voters actual control over their own preferences, just like we have when we vote in a federal election; will it keep MPs accountable to voters rather than to Mr Glenn Druery; and will it stop his squalid seat-buying scandals from bringing Victorian democracy into disrepute? And the answer to all of those questions

is the same: scrap group ticket voting. To quote a Labor legend, 'It's time.' For Gough's sake, no more kicking the can down the road – abolish group ticket voting now.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Inquiry into Fraud and Corruption Control in Local Government: A Follow up of Two Auditor-General Reports

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (10:43): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to speak on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's report on its inquiry into fraud and corruption control in local government, a follow-up of two Auditor-General reports. I chaired this inquiry last year and had the privilege of presenting this report in November last year to the house. The reason I bring it up today is that I am gravely concerned by some of the things that are currently going on with local governments within my electorate of Laverton, and I think I speak for a lot of locals on two of the most pertinent issues today.

To begin with, I was very concerned – appalled actually – that in the City of Brimbank, which covers my electorate, we recently saw our mayor and our deputy mayor attend a protest, which in and of itself is not the issue that I want to talk about. What is the issue, I have to say, is that they were standing side by side with One Nation – orange shirts, orange placards and everything One Nation. I just know that they would have done this against all suggestions from the council officers. We have a very multicultural community in Brimbank, a really important one, a great one, including a very vibrant and very proud Vietnamese community. In fact in Sunshine we are going to be opening Australia's first and only Vietnamese museum in coming months, and I have no doubt that these councillors will attend the opening of the Vietnamese museum. But what they do not realise is that this is the same community that 30 years ago Pauline Hanson and One Nation said were swamping Australia. How the mayor of our community and the deputy mayor –

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I think the member on her feet has strayed significantly from the committee report. It is very difficult to work out which committee report she is even talking about. I ask you to bring her back.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The committee report you are on is a PAEC report, is it?

Sarah CONNOLLY: Yes, it is, probably out of the depth of the member who raised the point of order.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I am offended by the comments made by the member for Laverton, and I ask you to (1) counsel her and (2) ask her to withdraw.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the member withdraw?

Sarah CONNOLLY: Withdrawn.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Continue, member for Laverton, on the committee report.

Sarah CONNOLLY: The report is on an inquiry into local government fraud and corruption control. How the mayor of the community and the deputy mayor, both community leaders, can stand side by side with One Nation and endorse that kind of rhetoric speaks absolute volumes to our local community, and I stand here proudly to condemn that kind of behaviour. The community deserves better. But of course Brimbank is not the only council in my electorate. I have four local governments that intersect, and what I do want to talk about today, naturally, is what has been happening with Wyndham City Council, and Wyndham City Council was certainly mentioned in this report.

As many people in this place would know, two municipal monitors have recently been appointed to Wyndham City Council, and rightly so, after a series of concerning revelations – serious revelations – over the span of many, many months. Indeed some of this goes to the contents of this inquiry, and I know that my colleagues the member for Point Cook and the member for Werribee have been quite

vocal in this place about some of the issues that have been going on with Wyndham City Council, such as their major cost blowout on upgrading their IT services. But to top it off, I do want to stand here in this place and join my community in Wyndham in calling for the embattled mayor of Wyndham to do the right thing and resign. In my view he should resign not just as the mayor of Wyndham but from council altogether. He is an elected ward councillor in my electorate, representing the majority of Truganina, a great suburb. It is Truganina locals, sporting clubs and businesses that are being let down by their elected representative failing time and time again to read the room.

To conclude, I do want to acknowledge the remarkable work of the committee, including my fellow members who served on this committee inquiry last year, as well as all of the committee secretariat, who have worked tirelessly to prepare the report. As I say time and time again here in this house, without the committee secretariat many of the reports that are tabled could just not be prepared in the first place, so thank you to Igor and the team. I am happy to commend the report to the house.

Bills

Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Statement of charter compatibility

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:49): Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility:

Opening paragraphs

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (the Charter), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026 (the Bill).

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

Overview

The Bill amends the *Racing Act 1958* (the Racing Act) to:

- amalgamate the functions and powers of the Racing Integrity Commissioner and the Victorian Racing Integrity Board into a new integrity assurance body;
- facilitate the establishment of successor entities of Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) and Harness Racing Victoria (HRV) as public companies limited by guarantee;
- provide legal authority for the successor entities to act as the controlling bodies for greyhound and harness racing in Victoria, and to grant those bodies specific powers to enable them to fulfil their purposes;
- include savings, transitional and consequential amendments relating to the amalgamation of the Racing Integrity Commissioner and Victorian Racing Integrity Board, and the transition of GRV and HRV to public companies limited by guarantee; and
- make various other amendments to improve and modernise the operation of the Racing Act.

The Bill amends the *Australian Grands Prix Act 1994* (AGP Act) to:

- enable the Minister to approve a motor sport event, for the purposes of section 20(e) of the AGP Act, by notice published in the Government Gazette, and
- provide the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) with the power to do the following in relation to approved motor sport events:
  - establish supporting facilities, services and activities in connection with holding an approved motor sport event; and
  - charge and collect fees for admission, whether the approved motor sport event is held at the Phillip Island Grand Prix circuit or elsewhere; and
  - grant, for free or for other consideration advertising rights, sponsorship rights, broadcasting rights or television rights or any other rights, licences or concessions in connection with an approved motor sport event.

The amendments made by the Bill will support the AGPC to host approved motor sport events, by empowering the AGPC with similar powers it has under AGP Act in relation to other events the AGPC hosts, such as the Formula One Grand Prix, the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix, and approved events – being events which are not Formula One events or motor sport events.

Human Rights Issues for the Racing amendments

The following rights are relevant to the Bill:

- recognition and equality before the law (section 8);
- privacy and reputation (section 13);
- the right to freedom of expression (section 15);
- the right to freedom of association (section 16);
- the right to take part in public life (section 18);
- the right to property (section 20); and
- the right to a fair hearing (section 24).

Under the Charter, rights can be subject to limits that are reasonable and justifiable in a free and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom. Rights may be limited to protect other rights.

Any limitations of these rights in the Bill are reasonable and justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

Equality (section 8)

Everyone is entitled to equal and effective protection against discrimination, and to enjoy their human rights without discrimination. The meaning of discrimination is found in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic). The Equal Opportunity Act outlines attributes protected in Victoria under this law, this includes 'industrial activity'.

'Profession, trade or occupation' is a protected attribute in section 6 of the Equal Opportunity Act, which is relevant to the Bill. The Equal Opportunity Act does not define 'profession, trade or occupation' however a fair reading would suggest that this section protects Victorians who face discrimination and stigma because of their employment.

Racing Integrity Commission Victoria (RICV)

The eligibility criteria for appointment to both the RICV Board and the role of Deputy Chairperson of the Victorian Racing Tribunal engage section 8 of the Charter as they restrict who can be appointed. The criteria are specifically set out in the new sections 82C, 82D and 50H. The limitation on section 8 of the Charter is necessary, reasonable and proportionate to ensure the Board and Tribunal are constituted with individuals who have the requisite skillset to perform their functions to a standard that will uphold integrity in the racing industry and ensure public confidence.

HRV and GRV

The new sections 116 and 123 promote section 8 of the Charter as they ensure the employees of GRV and HRV are employed on the same terms and conditions with the successor entities following the transfer of their employment. Although employees will be employed on 'the same' terms and conditions, there will be aspects of the public sector employment framework that will be unavailable to employees when they transfer into private sector employment with the successor entities. In particular, the statutory protections and obligations set out in the *Public Administration Act 2004* (Vic) will not apply to the successor entities as they will not be public entities. This will mean that the public sector employment principles and values, and the obligation to comply with Victorian Public Sector Commission codes and standards will not apply, neither will the Public Sector Industrial Relations Policies 2025. However, the new sections 116 and 123 will protect the individual's overarching entitlements to employment benefits with the successor entities and ensure their service with GRV and HRV is treated as being continuous following transfer to the successor entities. In doing this, sections 116 and 123 ensure the integrity and effect of the employee's lawful actions in their employment with GRV and HRV is maintained through their transfer of employment to the successor entities. This promotes and protects the rights of the employees pursuant to section 8 of the Charter.

The new sections 114(c) and 121(c) ensure that the successor entity is substituted into any contract entered into by GRV and HRV as a party, including the executive employment contracts. This promotes section 8 of the Charter by securing the employment of the executives of GRV and HRV on substantially the same terms and conditions with the successor entities following the transfer of employment.

Right to privacy (section 13(a))

Section 13(a) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy unlawfully and arbitrarily interfered with.

'Personal information' is defined in section 3(1) of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* to mean any information or opinion, whether true or not, that is recorded in any form, about an individual whose identity is apparent or can readily be ascertained, from the information.

Racing Integrity Commissioner

The Racing Integrity Commissioner has held the power to receive, process and share integrity related information since the role was established through the *Racing Legislation Amendment (Racing Integrity Assurance) Act 2009*.

The Bill amends the existing section 37B, which outlines the functions of the Racing Integrity Commissioner. These functions include the ability to conduct racing integrity related audits, investigations and own motion inquiries, as well as writing reports and making recommendations as part of investigations and inquiries.

These functions require the Racing Integrity Commissioner to receive, process and, in certain circumstances, share personal information. This gives rise to a prima facie interference with the privacy of individuals, albeit the interference is both lawful and necessary.

Where section 13(a) of the Charter is interfered with by the Bill, such interference is clearly provided for and is intended to equip the Racing Integrity Commissioner with the powers required to uphold the integrity of racing in Victoria. Interference with the right to privacy of persons occurs only as so far as is necessary. As such, the limitation of the right is reasonable and justified in a democratic society.

The right to privacy is engaged by the information sharing and consultation arrangements proposed in the new sections 37BAA(3)(a), 37BAB(1), 37BAC, 37BAE, 37BAF, 37F, 37FA(4) and 82K. The Racing Integrity Commissioner is responsible for investigating and liaising with external agencies in relation to racing integrity matters. The ability to share information in that context is critical to the overall success of the Racing Integrity Commissioner in their role of upholding integrity in Victorian racing.

The power to disclose personal information to specific third parties was prescribed through section 37E of the Racing Act, this contained both an exhaustive list of who information could be disclosed to, and a non-exhaustive list of what integrity related information was. The Bill substitutes a new section 37E into the Racing Act which largely aligns with the existing powers of the Racing Integrity Commissioner within this section. There is an expansion of the definition of 'integrity related information' to include information related to 'inquiries conducted under this Part', but this is a proportionate expansion and necessary in the context of the Racing Integrity Commissioner's power to conduct own motion inquiries prescribed within the Bill through the new section 37BAA.

The power for the Racing Integrity Commissioner to disclose information to appropriate agencies or persons, such as Victoria Police or the Ombudsman, through the new section 37E is necessary to uphold integrity in the Victorian racing industry. It is essential to any subsequent investigation that 'integrity related information' is disclosed to enable a full and proper investigation by the appropriate agency. Any interference with section 13(a) of the Charter is not arbitrary because the Racing Integrity Commissioner is subject to the requirements of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014. In addition, the new section 37E confines the disclosure of information by the Racing Integrity Commissioner to 'integrity related information' only and to a limited number of bodies or persons. This acts as a further protection against the arbitrary disclosure of information and represents a proportionate limit on the power.

The wording of the previous section 37E of the Racing Act, requiring that the Racing Integrity Commissioner only disclose information 'as appropriate', is retained. This means that the Racing Integrity Commissioner will exercise their power to disclose information at their own discretion. Although this is a significant discretionary power, the Bill maintains the safeguard against the abuse of such a power by requiring the Commissioner to submit to the Minister an annual report on the performance of their functions and the exercise of their powers, which will be tabled in Parliament, pursuant to the amended section 37F. This ensures accountability for the Racing Integrity Commissioner and acts as a check on the lawful use of their power.

The Bill clearly specifies the circumstances in which the sharing of information by the Racing Integrity Commissioner is lawful. The new sections 37BAB and 37BAC identify who a complaint can be referred to and the new section 37E prescribes who information can be disclosed to.

The provisions in the Bill that relate to the collection and sharing of information by the Racing Integrity Commissioner serve the legitimate aim of upholding integrity within the racing industry and are necessary to ensure the robust operation of the Victorian racing industry's integrity framework. This ensures public

confidence and protects against corruption. Further, the individuals impacted by these provisions have a limited expectation of privacy in a regulated industry. For these reasons, any interference with privacy is neither unlawful nor arbitrary, such that the right to privacy is not limited by the provision.

RICV

The Bill engages section 13(a) of the Charter through the functions of RICV. The new section 82B provides that the RICV may receive and deal with complaints about the performance of the Racing Integrity Commissioner, as well as liaise with and give advice to the Minister, the controlling bodies and the Racing Integrity Commissioner. The new section 82NF sets out the process for dealing with a complaint, which includes the sharing of information that might be personal. In receiving and sharing personal information in the course of its duties, the RICV may interfere with a person's right to privacy.

There are limits within the Bill on the RICV's powers to deal with complaints about the Racing Integrity Commissioner, for example the complaint must relate to the performance of the Racing Integrity Commissioner's functions and powers. In addition to this, any advice or liaison with the Minister, the Racing Integrity Commissioner or the controlling bodies must be in relation to racing integrity matters.

These powers are given to the RICV to ensure that the Racing Integrity Commissioner, the Minister and the controlling bodies are appropriately executing their integrity related functions. Any associated interference with an individual's right to privacy occurs only as so far as is necessary to further this aim. The exercise of the power is monitored through the requirement that the RICV submit to the Minister an annual report on its operations, which will be tabled in Parliament, pursuant to the new section 82NA. This provides a mechanism by which the RICV is directly accountable for its operations. As such, the interference with section 13(a) of the Charter is neither unlawful nor arbitrary and the right to privacy is not unreasonably limited by the functions of the RICV.

HRV and GRV

Following the certification of the successor entities of GRV and HRV, the property rights, liabilities and entitlements will be vested in the successor entities through the new sections 114 and 121. In addition to this, the successor entity will be substituted as a party to any arrangement entered into with the previous entities, or any proceedings in a court or tribunal which the previous entity were involved in. This may incidentally include or refer to information relating to persons. In each instance, the disclosure of information will be to the successor entity, as such disclosure is required to enable the new entity to undertake their new lawful duties, functions, or powers and fulfil any relevant liabilities or obligations.

The transfer of information from HRV and GRV to their successor entities may limit the right to privacy in the Charter. However, such a transfer would be lawful and aligned with the legitimate aims of the Bill of ensuring administrative continuity and effective delivery of statutory functions and services following the certification of the successor entities. In addition to this, the successor entities will be subject to legal obligations in relation to the handling, use and protection of information, such as the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014.

It is accepted that the transition of functions, powers and assets through the Bill from HRV and GRV to the successor entities may incidentally involve the transfer or disclosure of information about individuals, but any such interference with privacy will occur in accordance with law, will pursue a legitimate and proportionate objective, and will not be arbitrary.

Right to reputation (section 13(b))

Section 13(b) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their reputation unlawfully attacked.

The Racing Integrity Commissioner

The new section 37BAE gives the power to the Racing Integrity Commissioner to report the findings of an investigation or inquiry, or to make recommendations following the completion of an investigation or inquiry. This could result in an individual experiencing damage to their reputation. However, to uphold integrity standards and ensure accountability for those that fail to meet those standards, it is necessary for the Racing Integrity Commissioner to be able to take further action upon the completion of any investigation or inquiry, even if that might result in reputational harm. The further actions that are permitted within the new section 37BAE are clearly prescribed and are subject to proportionate limitations, for example section 37BAE(2) prevents the Racing Integrity Commissioner from identifying the complainant and the person who is the subject of the complaint if they are making a report pursuant to section 37BAE(1)(a). Further to this, when considering whether section 13(b) of the Charter is engaged, it is important to consider that an individual is only protected from having their reputation 'unlawfully attacked'. This Bill outlines the lawful processes that the Racing Integrity Commissioner must follow as part of any investigation or inquiry, any reputational harm

that results following the proper completion of an investigation or inquiry would be lawful and therefore not an unlawful interference with an individual's rights pursuant to section 13(b) of the Charter.

RICV

The Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister, previously had the power to remove members of the Victorian Racing Tribunal and Victorian Racing Integrity Board. This engaged the right to reputation. This power has been retained through the new section 82H, but it will now be applied to the RICV Board.

The RICV Board has the power pursuant to the new section 82NG to make a recommendation to the Minister that the Racing Integrity Commissioner be removed in circumstances where a complaint is made out against them.

The interference of the new sections 82H and 82NG to the right to reputation of the RICV Board members, and the Racing Integrity Commissioner, are neither arbitrary nor unlawful. The interference with reputation is limited to the circumstances outlined in sections 82H(a), (b) and 82NG(2)(c). These restrictions on the right to reputation are necessary to ensure that the functions of the RICV and the Racing Integrity Commissioner can be performed free from any perception of bias or conflict of interest and to ensure good governance led by members of appropriate expertise. As such, the interference is justified in a democratic society.

HRV and GRV

The Minister previously had the power to remove directors of the Board from HRV and GRV. The Minister will retain that power over the successor entities through the new sections 38C and 66C. This power does not automatically limit an individual's right to reputation, it will depend on the circumstances of the removal and, in particular, whether the removal results in reputational harm. It is imperative that the Minister retains the power to remove directors to secure effective oversight of harness and greyhound racing in Victoria. Such a limitation on the right to reputation is reasonable and justified having regard to the importance of integrity and public confidence in the Boards of the successor entities.

The new sections 116 and 123 provide for the transfer of employees from GRV and HRV to the successor entities. The transfer of an individual's employment is a necessary structural measure to ensure the efficient and effective reorganisation of GRV and HRV into the successor entities. The transfer of employees is not an assessment of their competence or conduct. If the transfer of employment to the successor entities results in an employee's reputation being incidentally impacted, then it would be a proportionate and lawful consequence of the decision to restructure public entities for legitimate purposes. The Bill's provisions may engage the right to reputation, but any limitation is reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. Therefore, the Bill is consistent with the right in section 13(b) of the Charter.

Freedom of expression (section 15)

Section 15(1) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to hold an opinion without interference. Section 15(2) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to freedom of expression which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, whether within or outside Victoria and whether orally; or in writing; or in print; or by way of art; or in another medium chosen by him or her.

Racing Integrity Commissioner

The right to freedom of expression is engaged by the new section 37BDA. This gives the power to an individual to seek legal advice and be represented by a legal practitioner in relation to an inquiry or investigation conducted by the Racing Integrity Commissioner. The section generally empowers the rights of the individual under section 15(2) of the Charter by clearly stating their right to seek, receive and benefit from legal advice and representation.

The new section 37BDA(4) gives the power to the Racing Integrity Commissioner to direct that an individual cannot seek legal advice or representation from a specified legal practitioner if there are reasonable grounds for believing that the inquiry or investigation to which the matter relates may be prejudiced because the legal practitioner is representing another person who is involved, or suspected of being involved in the matter that is the subject of the inquiry or investigation. This limits section 15(2) of the Charter, but the limit is not arbitrary because the Bill outlines the circumstances where the Racing Integrity Commissioner may exercise this power. In addition, the Bill safeguards against any detriment the individual may experience from the exercise of the power under section 37BDA(4) by ensuring that the individual is given additional time to obtain alternative legal representation pursuant to section 37BDA(6). In the circumstances, this is a reasonable limit to maintain the independence and integrity of any investigation or inquiry.

Freedom of association (section 16)

Section 16(2) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions.

Racing Victoria, HRV and GRV

The successor entities for HRV and GRV will retain the function to make rules for the control, supervision and regulation of their respective racing industries in Victoria, through sections 38D and 66D respectively. The Bill will also include a new section 3CA which will make explicit that Racing Victoria has the equivalent function in the Victorian horse racing industry. The successor entities and Racing Victoria will be able to enforce the rules, which will include the power to suspend or exclude an individual from participation. This engages section 16(2) of the Charter as it limits an individual's right to associate, assemble and participate. This limitation is both proportionate and justified because the integrity and effective governance of harness, greyhound and horse racing in Victoria hinges on the ability of the controlling bodies to implement and uphold rules that maintain lawful participation. In particular, these functions and powers allow the controlling bodies to act in a way that: upholds integrity in racing; ensures public confidence; safeguards against animal welfare risks and maintain standards for equipment used in racing. The penalties of breaking those rules, such as exclusion or suspension, may limit section 16(2) of the Charter, but such a limit is necessary and proportionate in the context of the overarching importance of the rules in protecting these fundamental elements of harness, greyhound and horse racing in Victoria.

HRV and GRV

The new sections 118 and 125 have the effect of retaining the decisions previously made by HRV and GRV relating to the exclusion or suspension of individuals. These new sections ensure that any decision previously made in accordance with the rules would be taken as if it were made by the successor entity. This engages section 16(2) of the Charter as it restricts participation. The limit is justified to maintain integrity, safety and public confidence in racing. The Bill simply retains these pre-existing decisions lawfully made under the previous rules and transfers the decisions to the successor entities.

The Bill expressly defines who the rules of the successor entities are binding upon in the new sections 38G and 66G. This ensures that the successor entities cannot exercise the powers given to them within the rules to apply penalties arbitrarily. In providing this reasonable and proportionate limitation of the application of the rules, the Bill further protects against the interference of an individual's rights pursuant to section 16(2) of the Charter.

<u>Taking part in public life (section 18)</u>

Section 18(1) of the Charter provides that every person in Victoria has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination, to participate in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

RICV

This right is engaged by the eligibility requirements for appointments to the RICV Board. The new sections 82C and 82D provide criteria for appointments to the RICV Board.

The criteria and exclusions for appointments are set out in the Bill. They may be perceived as interfering with a person's right to have access, on general terms of equality, to the Victorian public service and public office to the extent that they restrict who can be appointed based on defined criteria. However, these criteria ensure the appointment of members is based on principles of merit and facilitate effective governance practices and integrity. To the extent that these provisions impose a restriction on a person's right to take part in public life, they are a reasonable limitation that is justified in a democratic society.

<u>Property rights (section 20)</u>

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of his or her property other than in accordance with law.

RICV

The eligibility requirements for appointment to the RICV Board engage this right. The new section 82C outlines eligibility requirements for the appointment of the RICV Board, including ineligibility if the person has, or obtains, a proprietary interest in a thoroughbred or standard bred racehorse, or a racing greyhound. This limitation is necessary to mitigate any commercial conflict of interest that may undermine the independence and impartiality of the Victorian racing industry's integrity framework.

As part of the establishment of the RICV, the new section 82A(2)(d) gives the power to the RICV to acquire, hold and dispose of real and personal property. This provision is included to assist with the effective organisation and running of the RICV. It allows them to purchase and maintain property for that reason. There is no power within this Bill for the RICV to collect fines or acquire property for a punitive purpose. On that basis, this provision does not engage section 20 of the Charter.

HRV and GRV

The new sections 114 and 121 transfer property rights and liabilities that were vested in GRV and HRV to the successor entities. This may impact on the property rights of individuals where they have an existing property or financial relationship with GRV or HRV. An example of this would be if an individual was owed a debt or was due to receive a bonus payment from GRV or HRV. Section 114 and 121 do not limit the property rights that arise from section 20 of the Charter, instead they have the effect of promoting and protecting those rights.

Fair hearing (section 24)

Section 24(1) of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence or a party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the charge or proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing.

RICV

The new section 82NC provides the RICV Board members with statutory immunity from civil liability and restricts causes of actions being brought against a member of the RICV Board. These immunities interfere with a person's right to a fair hearing as they restrict the right of an individual to pursue a legal course specifically in relation to members of the Board.

The limitation of the liability of the RICV Board members confines claims that might otherwise have existed under statute or general law. However, it is appropriate as the absence of immunity may undermine the function of the Board members who would operate under a fear of liability. The provisions promote the independence of the RICV Board. In addition to this, the protection is limited within section 82NC(1)(a) and (b) and any individual seeking to pursue a cause of action following a perceived wrong is still able to bring a claim against the Integrity Commission, pursuant to the new section 82NC(2). For these reasons, the interference is justified in a democratic society.

The new section 82ND(2) introduces a time limit on when a complaint can be made to the RICV about the Racing Integrity Commissioner. The time limit engages section 24 of the Charter it may restrict an individual's access to the complaints process if a complaint is pursued out of time. However, the time limit is necessary to promote procedural fairness and ensure a timely resolution to issues. This reduces the risk of prejudice arising from the delay of any investigation process. In that context, the extent to which the time limit restricts section 24 of the Charter is reasonable and justified.

The new section 82NE(2) outlines circumstances in which the RICV Board may reject a complaint. This is a procedural filtering mechanism which is a legitimate aspect of a fair hearing system. Section 24 of the Charter does not guarantee an unconditional right to have a complaint accepted. Section 82NE(2)(b) details the statutory criteria that set fair limits on the pursuit of a complaint. These limitations are necessary to avoid the misuse of the complaints process. In addition to the clearly defined limits, section 82NE(3) requires the RICV Board to set out in writing for the complainant, as soon as possible, the reasons for rejecting a complaint. These safeguards ultimately promote section 24 of the Charter and are reasonable and justified.

Victorian Racing Integrity Board

The Victorian Racing Integrity Board will be abolished by the Bill. It is intended that the RICV will manage all integrity outcomes currently provided by the two bodies and enhance the integrity framework by streamlining functions, reducing confusion amongst stakeholders, while reducing the overall burden on code bodies and sharing support staff, information and expertise. As a result of these improvements, to the extent to which section 24 of the Charter might be engaged, the right is strengthened through the changes.

Human rights issues for the Australian Grands Prix amendments

The following rights are relevant to the Bill:

- freedom of movement (section 12)
- freedom of expression (section 15)
- the right to property (section 20)

Clause 81 of the Bill amends the AGP Act to provide for three new powers for the AGPC. This reform is aimed at providing the AGPC with similar powers for hosting approved motor sport events to those it is already granted under section 21(1) of the AGP Act for hosting other events (such as the Formula One Grand Prix and approved events).

Clause 81(1) provides the AGPC with a new power to establish supporting facilities, services and activities in connection with holding an approved motor sporting event. This reform may engage the right protected under section 12 (freedom of movement) of the Charter but does not restrict this right.

Freedom of movement (section 12)

It is possible that the AGPC exercising its new power to establish any supporting facilities, services and/or activities in connection with holding an approved motor sport event may engage the right to freedom of movement.

However, it is noted that unlike other powers that the AGPC has under the AGP Act in relation to hosting other events, this amendment does not provide the AGPC with the power to control or restrict admission to any supporting facilities, services or activities held in connection with holding an approved motor sport event.

This is compared to the powers the AGPC has under the AGP Act for controlling admission to certain areas in Albert Park for hosting Formula 1 Grand Prix events (section 21(1)(d) of the AGP Act) and the Phillip Island Grand Prix circuit for Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix events (section 21(1)(da) of the AGP Act).

I consider then that where the right to the freedom of movement may be engaged by the reforms to the AGP Act made by this Bill, that the right is not restricted.

Power to charge and collect fees for admission to an approved motor sport event

Clause 81(2) provides the AGPC with the power to charge and collect fees for admission to an approved motor sport event, whether held at the Phillip Island Grand Prix circuit or at other motor sporting circuits elsewhere.

Property rights (section 20)

It may be possible that the reform to provide the AGPC the power to charge and collect fees for admission to approved motor sport events, engages with the property rights of motor sport circuit owners, in their ability to charge entry or otherwise organise motor sport event at these venues.

As section 6(1) of the Charter provides that only persons have human rights, the extent to which this new power may engage with property rights is limited to scenarios where the AGPC has entered into an agreement with a motor sport circuit owner who is a natural person or an unincorporated entity, rather than a company or other incorporated body.

Further, this amendment does not prevent or restrict a motor sport circuit owner from charging and collecting fees for entry to the motor sport circuit, or to organise an event at their motor sport circuit. Rather, this amendment merely permits the AGPC, when hosting an approved motor sport event at Phillip Island Grand Prix circuit or elsewhere, to be able to charge and collect fees for admission to the event.

I therefore consider that where property rights may be engaged by the reforms made to the AGP Act by the Bill, that this right is not restricted.

Power to grant, for free or other consideration advertising rights, sponsorship rights, broadcasting rights or television rights or any other rights, licences or concessions in connection with an approved motor sport event

Clause 81(3) provides the AGPC with the power to grant advertising, sponsorship and broadcasting or television rights, or any other rights, licences or concessions in connection with an approved motor sport event.

It is intended that this will allow the AGPC to enter into commercial arrangements to support any approved motor sport event that it may be arranging.

Freedom of expression (section 15)

By providing the AGPC with the power to grant advertising, sponsorship, broadcasting and other rights in connection with hosting approved motor sport events, this could engage with the right to freedom of expression.

While this right may be engaged by this new power, it is noted that the reform does not empower the AGPC to authorise any recording or filming that is undertaken by people attending an approved motor sport event. This is compared to the power the AGPC is provided to authorise certain types of filming or recording of Formula 1 Grand Prix events, Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix events and approved events by patrons (see sections 35(1), 35(1A), and 42B(1) of the AGP Act).

I therefore consider that where the right to freedom of expression may be engaged by the reforms made to the AGP Act by the Bill, that this right is not restricted.

Other reforms made to the AGP Act by the Bill

In my view, the other amendment made in clause 80 by the Bill to the AGP Act, which enables the Minister to approve a motor sport event for the purposes of section 20(e), does not engage with any rights protected under the Charter.

Accordingly, I am satisfied that the reforms to the AGP Act introduced by this Bill are compatible with the Charter.

Hon Anthony Carbines MP
Minister for Racing

Statement of treaty compatibility

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:49): Under the Statewide Treaty Act 2025, I table a statement of treaty compatibility:

1. In my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the objects set out in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025*. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the Bill

2. The Bill amends the *Racing Act 1958* (the Racing Act) to:
   - amalgamate the functions and powers of the Racing Integrity Commissioner and the Victorian Racing Integrity Board into a new integrity assurance body;
   - facilitate the establishment of successor entities of Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) and Harness Racing Victoria (HRV) as public companies limited by guarantee;
   - provide legal authority for the successor entities to act as the controlling bodies for greyhound and harness racing in Victoria, and to grant those bodies specific powers to enable them to fulfil their purposes;
   - include savings, transitional and consequential amendments relating to the amalgamation of the Racing Integrity Commissioner and Victorian Racing Integrity Board, and the transition of GRV and HRV to public companies limited by guarantee; and make various other amendments to improve and modernise the operation of the Act.
3. The Bill implements reforms to the *Australian Grands Prix Act 1994* (AGP Act) to:
   - enable the Minister to approve a motor sport event, for the purposes of section 20(e) of the AGP Act, by notice published in the Government Gazette, and
   - provide the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) with the power to do the following in relation to approved motor sport events:
     - establish supporting facilities, services and activities in connection with holding an approved motor sport event; and
     - charge and collect fees for admission, whether the approved motor sport event is held at the Phillip Island Grand Prix circuit or elsewhere; and
     - grant, for free or for other consideration advertising rights, sponsorship rights, broadcasting rights or television rights or any other rights, licences or concessions in connection with an approved motor sport event.
4. The amendments made by the Bill will support the AGPC to host approved motor sport events, by empowering the AGPC with similar powers it has under AGP Act in relation to other events the AGPC hosts, such as the Formula One Grand Prix, the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix, and approved events – being events which are not Formula One events or motor sport events.

Consultation with the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl

5. Due to the recent establishment of the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl, it was not possible to give the First Peoples' Assembly the opportunity to advise on the Bill or for them to otherwise make representations about the effect of the Bill on First Peoples.

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

6. I have considered whether the Bill is compatible with the objects at section 66(3)(d) of the Statewide Treaty Act 2025:
   - 6.1 advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples; and
   - 6.2 addressing the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation; and
   - 6.3 ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples.

7 The Bill does not in its terms deal with First Peoples, nor is it expected that any aspects of the Bill will, in practice, have a differential impact on First Peoples. It therefore does not affect the objects in the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025*.

Conclusion

8 In my opinion the Bill does not affect the objects specified in section 66(3)(d)(i) to (iii) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* and is therefore compatible with each of those objects.

Hon Anthony Carbines MP
Minister for Racing

Second reading

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:49): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting the long-term sustainability of the Victorian Racing Industry (VRI).

The VRI contributes $4.7 billion to the Victorian economy annually, including $501 million in taxation revenue, and supports over 34,500 full-time equivalent jobs. It operates within the context of an ever-evolving racing landscape, and it is important to ensure that entity arrangements that govern the industry remain fit-for-purpose and that public confidence is upheld in the racing integrity framework.

The Bill will amend the *Racing Act 1958* (the Racing Act) to:

- Enhance Victoria's racing integrity framework by amalgamating the functions and powers of the Racing Integrity Commissioner (RIC) and the Victorian Racing Integrity Board (VRIB) into a new integrity assurance body, the Racing Integrity Commission Victoria (the Integrity Commission)
- Establish Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) and Harness Racing Victoria (HRV) as public companies limited by guarantee
- Make amendments to improve the operations of the Victorian Racing Tribunal, and
- Make miscellaneous minor amendments to improve the operation of the Racing Act.

<u>The Integrity Commission</u>

Robust racing integrity systems are integral to the ongoing success of the Victorian Racing industry.

The office of the RIC was established in 2010 to provide independent assurance of racing integrity across the three codes. The functions of the RIC include powers to audit the performance of the integrity systems of the code bodies and to act as a quasi-ombudsman in responding to complaints in relation to racing integrity. The RIC also holds significant board of inquiry powers.

The VRIB was established in 2019 to provide additional assurance of racing integrity within the controlling bodies.

The RIC and VRIB have successfully operated side by side over the past 5 years to provide racing integrity assurance of the delivery of integrity services by the codes. Whilst their activities have complemented each other, the similarity of some functions has led to confusion within the industry regarding the relative responsibilities of each body.

The amalgamation of the functions and powers of the RIC and VRIB into the new Integrity Commission will streamline and enhance the provision of racing integrity assurance within the industry.

The establishment of the Integrity Commission is consistent with the government focus on removing duplication and focusing on excellence in service delivery as advocated in the government response to the Silver Review.

Importantly, the responsibility for the day-to-day delivery of racing integrity services will remain the responsibility of the three racing controlling bodies – Racing Victoria, GRV and HRV.

The Integrity Commission will be comprised of the statutory office of the RIC, which will be retained due to the nature of its investigatory and inquiry powers, and a small three-person board. VRIB will be abolished.

The existing functions and powers of the RIC will remain largely the same but will be broadened to:

- Recognise that the RIC will also perform the duties of the Chief Executive Officer of the Integrity Commission
- Extend audit powers to cover racing integrity matters, including an assessment of controlling bodies performance against racing integrity policies, procedures, plans, and budgets
- Broaden the RIC's function to also investigate complaints made by a senior member of an integrity department of a controlling body in relation to integrity matters which are internal to the controlling body. This will ensure that any complaints considered by the former VRIB can still be investigated.

The Bill also contains a requirement for controlling bodies to provide an annual integrity plan to the RIC each year. The adequacy of this plan can be audited as part of the RIC's audit function.

The RIC will be required to consult with the Integrity Commission before exercising its audit function and prior to conducting an own motion inquiry. This will provide an additional level of oversight of the performance of some of the RIC's functions.

One of the main functions of the Integrity Commission board will be to provide oversight of performance of the RIC's functions and powers, and compliance with the policy and procedures set down by the board. While the RIC will act independently of the board in the conduct of inquiries and investigations, they will be accountable to the board in terms of the performance of its functions and exercise of its coercive powers.

This will provide assurance that the RIC acts lawfully and properly in the performance of their functions.

The Integrity Commission will also be able to receive and deal with complaints about the performance of the functions and exercise of the powers of the RIC.

The Integrity Commission may accept complaints from someone who is the subject of, or affected by, a decision, finding or recommendation made by the RIC during an investigation or inquiry, where that complaint is made within one year of the outcome of the investigation or inquiry.

The Integrity Commission is not required to accept all complaints and may reject a complaint if it is trivial, not genuine or does not meet other criteria specified in the Bill. The Integrity Commission may also refer a complaint to other people or bodies if appropriate.

Following consideration of the complaint the Integrity Commission can determine if the complaint is made out and what, if any, action is warranted. This may include making recommendations to the Minister, including that the RIC be removed.

The Integrity Commission will undertake other functions to ensure there is no gap in racing integrity assurance following the abolition of the VRIB.

The Integrity Commission will undertake the important function of considering and providing advice on any disciplinary action that a controlling body proposed to take against a senior member of an integrity department in relation to integrity matters which are internal to the controlling body. This continues to ensure that senior integrity staff within controlling bodies are free from undue influence from other senior members or Board members in carrying out integrity related duties.

It will monitor developments and trends related to racing integrity to inform its oversight of the RIC and any advice that it might provide to the Minister, RIC, or controlling bodies. The Integrity Commission will also have the authority to provide advice to controlling bodies on specific racing integrity issues if the Board considers it appropriate to do so.

The Integrity Commission board will be comprised of three members, appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister for Racing. The board members must have the skills, experience and sufficient knowledge of any of the codes to carry out the functions of the board.

The Bill sets out eligibility criteria that precludes certain persons from being appointed to the board, including a person with a position in a code body or those with a proprietary interest in a racehorse, standardbred or racing greyhound.

Operationally a single body of staff in will support the operations of the RIC and the Board.

The Bill allows the department to recover the costs of the Integrity Commission from the controlling bodies. This is consistent with the approach taken to the former VRIB and consistent with the wider government principles that those who benefit from the service should pay for it.

The Bill will enhance natural justice principles by introducing an express right for a person subject to an inquiry or investigation by the RIC to seek legal advice and be represented.

Transition of GRV and HRV to companies limited by guarantee

The existing governance arrangements for Victorian thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing are an artifact of policies at the time of their establishment.

From 1871 until 2001, thoroughbred racing in Victoria was controlled and administered by the Victoria Racing Club (VRC), a privately constituted association. In 2001, the Victorian Parliament passed legislation to facilitate the creation of a new governing body for thoroughbred racing in Victoria – Racing Victoria (RV).

At the time Parliament noted that the body vested with powers to govern thoroughbred racing in Victoria should be independent, accountable, and totally committed to the task of developing, encouraging, promoting and managing the conduct of thoroughbred racing in the state. Accordingly, RV was established as a public company limited by guarantee.

By contrast, greyhound and harness racing in Victoria have been administered and controlled by statutory entities since 1954 and 1946 respectively.

At the time of their establishment many of the key business planning powers and functions critical to racing operations were subject to ministerial or other government control. This included the distribution of monies to those bodies and racing clubs and the setting of race dates. Under these conditions it was sensible for the greyhound and harness code bodies to be set up as government entities.

However, the key accountabilities and responsibilities of the greyhound and harness code bodies have changed in recent years in response to industry conditions and governance arrangements.

While GRV and HRV do have some regulatory and advisory functions, the bulk of the code bodies' responsibilities in the current day have little alignment with those highlighted by the government as typically undertaken by public entities.

It is critical that these important industries, that provide significant employment in regional Victoria have governance arrangements that are fit for purpose and enable them to innovate and operate as demanded by their commercial environments.

To that end, the Bill dissolves the statutory authorities of GRV and HRV and provides for the establishment of two new bodies to control the harness and greyhound racing industries in Victoria. These new bodies will adopt the same legal structure as RV, as public companies limited by guarantee, providing consistency in regulatory settings across the three codes of the Victorian racing industry.

While the new harness and greyhound companies will not be statutory authorities, they will continue to deliver the same core functions as the current entities.

The new companies will have the function to, amongst other things:

- Act as the bodies that control and regulate the Victorian greyhound and harness racing industries respectively in Victoria
- Make and adopt rules for participation in, and the control, supervision and regulation of their respective industries
- Undertake activities to protect integrity and promote participant and horse and greyhound welfare respectively within their industries, and
- Undertake commercial activities conducive to the promotion and development of their respective industries.

The Bill includes appropriate safeguards to ensure the operations of the new bodies are aligned with government policy objectives. This is a similar approach to that taken by government when RV was established in 2001.

The Bill sets out specific requirements for the constitutions of each company. This includes specifying the core objectives of the company that are essential to the proper management of the harness and greyhound racing industries and the governance framework that the companies will adopt.

The Minister for Racing will be empowered to appoint directors to the boards of the companies and remove a director or reconstitute the boards in specific circumstances.

Corporations Act displacement provisions

The Bill also includes specific provisions that ensure that there is appropriate oversight of future changes to the company constitutions, and that the companies continue to operate within the initial parameters established by the Parliament.

Specifically, the Bill requires that the companies must notify the Minister of any special resolution to modify or repeal the company constitution, or a provision of the constitution. If the Minister receives such a

notification, they must cause a copy of it to be laid before each House of Parliament. Parliament may, on or before the 6th sitting day of that House after a copy of the notification is laid before it, resolve to disapprove the special resolution.

The government notes that this conflicts with Section 136(2) of the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) that provides that a company may modify or repeal its constitution by special resolution. Consequently, the Bill includes provisions that declare the proposed new section 38B and 66B of the Racing Act 1958 to be Corporations legislation displacement provisions for the purposes of section 5G of the Corporations Act.

The Bill also provides the companies with the power to suspend the members of a committee or other managing body of a harness racing club (new section 38I) or a greyhound racing club (section 77) and may appoint a fit and proper person to be the administrator of the club. While this maintains the current powers set out in the Act, it is inconsistent with Chapter 5 of the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) that deals with external administration.

The Bill recognises this and declares that those provisions are Corporations legislation displacement provision.

Transitional provisions

The Bill includes transitional provisions to enable an efficient transfer of powers and functions from the GRV and HRV statutory authorities to the newly certified companies.

Specifically, the Bill provides amongst other things that various rights, properties, liabilities, proceedings, rules of racing, decisions of the respective GRV and HRV boards, and existing arrangements and agreements relevant to the GRV and HRV statutory authorities immediately before commencement of the new companies are preserved and vested in the new companies.

The Bill also deems that a person who was employed by GRV/HRV immediately before the commencement day will transfer to the new companies on the same terms and conditions as those that applied to the employee as an employee of old GRV/HRV immediately before the commencement day.

Operational improvements to the Victorian Racing Tribunal (the Tribunal)

The Bill also makes various other amendments to improve and modernise the operation of the Act, including the qualification and composition provisions for the Tribunal.

The Tribunal plays a pivotal role in upholding integrity within Victoria's racing industry, addressing disciplinary matters across thoroughbred, harness, and greyhound racing.

It is responsible for hearing appeals relating to steward's decisions to impose penalties on racing industry participants under the various Rules of Racing and to determine charges relating to serious offences under the Rules of Racing.

It is vital that these matters are dealt with in a timely and efficient manner.

To that end, the Bill makes several improvements to the operational effectiveness of the Tribunal. The Bill expands the eligibility criteria for the appointment of deputy chairpersons to include former and reserve judicial officers from other jurisdictions. It also amends the eligibility criteria for appointment as a deputy chair to remove the requirement that all deputy chairs be former or current judicial officers and that each deputy chair has knowledge and experience in a specified racing code.

The amendments will require that one deputy chair is a former or current judicial officer with the other deputy chairs being Australian lawyers with at least 15 years' experience, that have knowledge and experience in greyhound racing, or harness racing, or thoroughbred racing.

The Bill will also amend the Act to enable the appointment of up to 4 deputy chairs, improving scheduling flexibility.

Racing Victoria amendments

As previously mentioned, the Bill sets out the functions and powers for the new greyhound and harness racing companies. For consistency and greater transparency about the functions and powers of all three of the racing controlling bodies, the Bill inserts a new section 3CA into the Act that sets out the functions and powers of RV. The new section provides an explicit legislative basis for the functions and powers that were initially transferred from the Victoria Racing Club to RV in the *Racing (Racing Victoria Limited) Act 2001* but were not specifically detailed within the Act.

Miscellaneous amendments

The Bill also makes miscellaneous amendments to refresh definitions, repeal obsolete terms, some of which date back to the early 1900's, and redundant provisions. The Bill also consolidates the provisions relating to

racing on ANZAC Day in section 22 of the Act and provides the Minister with the power to vary a racing club licence, or conditions attached to a racing club licence.

The Australian Grands Prix amendments

The *Australian Grands Prix Act 1994* (the AGP Act) empowers the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) to hold a range of events, including the Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix (Grand Prix) at Albert Park, the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix (motogp), as well as approved motor sport events, and approved events – being events that are not a Formula One event or a motor sport events.

The AGPC is adept in delivering world class motor sport events. For example, the Grand Prix, a pillar of Victoria's major events calendar since 1996, provides a significant contribution to the Victorian visitor economy and holds the record for the highest attended weekend sporting event ever staged in Melbourne.

In 2025, the Grand Prix increased Victoria's Gross State Product by $323.9 million, generated an estimated $3.08 in economic impact for the state for every dollar invested by the Victorian government and supported an estimated 1,631 annual full-time equivalent jobs through roles such as event construction and hospitality.

The AGP Act currently provides the AGPC with a range of powers in relation to hosting events. However, the AGPC is not provided with similar powers for hosting all event types and limitations have been identified on the AGPC's ability to arrange approved motor sport events.

The Bill addresses these limitations by providing the AGPC with the following powers for approved motor sport events:

- Establishing supporting facilities, services and activities
- Charging and collecting fees for admission, whether held at the Phillip Island Grand Prix circuit, or elsewhere
- Granting, for free or other consideration advertising rights, sponsorship rights, broadcasting rights or television rights or any other rights, licences or concessions.

The Bill also enables the Minister to approve motor sport events for the purposes of section 20(e) of the AGP Act by notice published in the Government Gazette.

The amendments will ensure the AGPC has adequate powers to efficiently host approved motor sport events in Victoria and similar powers exist under the AGP Act for all events the AGPC can host. It will also enable the AGPC to leverage its expertise and vast industry connections to attract and deliver new and exciting motor sport events to the sporting and major events capital.

Without these amendments, the AGPC's capacity to leverage the maximum economic benefit from hosting approved motor sport events including via ticket sales and granting certain commercial rights could not be realised. This would decrease AGPC's revenue potential and would minimise the commercial viability and attractiveness of Victoria to motor sport event owners as a replacement for the motogp.

Conclusion

The amendments to the Racing Act will ensure the ongoing success and sustainability of the racing industry and uphold public confidence in the integrity framework. Amendments to the AGP Act will ensure the AGPC has adequate powers to efficiently host approved motor sport events in Victoria.

I commend the Bill to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:49): I move:

That debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday 17 June.

Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2026

Statement of charter compatibility

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (10:51): Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility:

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

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

Overview of the Bill

This Bill is an omnibus Bill that proposes amendments to four Acts, including the:

1. *Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008* (**ART Act**) to require registered ART providers to comply with an approved accreditation scheme, to make amendments to provisions relating to the registration for registered ART providers and to provide broader entry and inspection powers for the Secretary;
2. *Non-Emergency Patient Transport and First Aid Services Act 2003* to expand the scope of the regulations power in relation to the incorporation of documents;
3. *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (**PHW Act**) to amend provisions in relation to the registration of cooling tower systems and to clarify that responsibility for a cooling tower lies with the person who owns, manages, or operates it;
4. *Radiation Act 2005* (**Radiation Act**) in relation to the disposal of radiation sources including the creation of an offence provision for improper disposal of radiation sources and to create a regulatory scheme for the provision of financial assurances and for other purposes.

Human Rights

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

- right to life (section 9)
- right to privacy (section 13(a));
- right to freedom of expression (section 15);
- right to property (section 20);
- right to a fair hearing (section 24(1));
- right to be presumed innocent (section 25(1)); and
- right to protection against self-incrimination (section 25(2)(k)).

Human Rights issues

This Statement of Compatibility commences with an outline of the rights engaged by the Bill and then discusses the compatibility of relevant Parts of the Bill with those rights.

The human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to this Bill are as follows:

Right to life (section 9)

Section 9 of the Charter provides that every person has the right to life and the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of life. An 'arbitrary' deprivation of life may be described as one that is unreasonable or disproportionate. The right imposes a negative obligation on public authorities to refrain from conduct that causes an arbitrary deprivation of life, and in comparative jurisdictions has also been interpreted to impose a positive obligation to take reasonable steps to prevent arbitrary deprivation of life.

Right to privacy (section 13)

Section 13(a) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. An interference will be lawful if it is permitted by a law which is precise and appropriately circumscribed, and will be arbitrary if it is capricious, unpredictable, unjust or unreasonable, in the sense of being disproportionate to the legitimate aim sought. The right to privacy encompasses rights to informational privacy.

Right to freedom of expression (section 15(2))

Section 15(2) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds. However, section 15(3) provides that special duties and responsibilities attach to this right, which may be subject to lawful restrictions reasonably necessary to respect the rights and reputations of others, or for the protection of national security, public order, public health or public morality.

Right to property (section 20)

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with law. This right requires that powers which authorise the deprivation of property are conferred by legislation or the common law, are confined and structured rather than unclear, are accessible to the public, and are formulated precisely.

Right to a fair hearing (section 24)

Section 24(1) of the Charter relevantly provides that a party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the charge or proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing. The concept of a 'civil proceeding' is not limited to judicial decision makers but may encompass the decision-making procedures of many types of tribunals, boards and other administrative decision-makers with the power to determine private rights and interests. While recognising the broad scope of section 24(1), the term 'proceeding' and 'party' suggest that section 24(1) was intended to apply only to decision-makers who conduct proceedings with parties.

Right to presumption of innocence (section 25(1))

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

Right to protection against self-incrimination (section 25(2)(k))

Section 25(2)(k) of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence is entitled not to be compelled to testify against themselves or to confess guilt. This right is at least as broad as the common law privilege against self-incrimination. It applies to protect a charged person against the admission in subsequent criminal proceedings of incriminatory material obtained under compulsion, regardless of whether the information was obtained prior to or subsequent to the charge being laid.

Amendments to the *Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008* (ART Act)

Creation of offence provisions regarding compliance with accreditation scheme and other accreditation scheme offences

The Bill inserts the following offences into the ART Act which contain an exception in the form of an excuse:

- New s 73 provides that a registered ART provider must comply with the requirements of an approved accreditation scheme unless they have a reasonable excuse;
- New s 77B makes it an offence for a registered ART provider not to advise the Secretary within 24 hours after receiving notification that their application for accreditation under an approved accreditation scheme is either refused or revoked, without reasonable excuse; and
- New s 80B(2) makes it an offence for a registered ART provider that is a body corporate not to comply with a request for information issued under new s 80A(1) in respect of a director or officer exercising control over the provider, without reasonable excuse.

Presumption of innocence (section 25(1))

These offences contain excuses (also known as exceptions) which place an evidential burden on the accused which require the accused to present or point to evidence that suggests a reasonable possibility of the existence of facts that would establish the exception or excuse. The Supreme Court has held that evidential onus provisions on an accused to establish an exception does not transfer the legal burden of proof and does not limit the right to the presumption of innocence. Once the accused has pointed to evidence of a reasonable excuse, the burden shifts back to the prosecution who must prove the essential elements of the offence to a legal standard. Further, the exceptions relate to matters which are peculiarly within an accused's knowledge, being why they failed to comply with the regulator requirements and would be unduly onerous for a prosecution to disprove at first instance.

Accordingly, I am of the view that these offence provisions are compatible with the Charter.

Secretary's powers in respect of applications for registration, renewal, amendment or variation to registration, cancellation powers of the Minister, and other oversight functions

The Bill introduces a new regulatory framework for registration as an ART provider which provides the Secretary with various powers to make decisions regarding new applications for registration (per new s 74) and applications for renewal, amendment or variation to registration for existing ART providers (per new ss 74D, 75AB). In exercising the above powers in respect of applications, renewals and amendment or variation in new ss 74, 74D and 75AB, the Bill provides the Secretary the power to request that an applicant provide further information or documents in relation to the application by a date specified, and to refuse to consider the application until the applicant complies (new ss 74(3)–(4), 74D(3)–(4), 75AB(3)–(4)). The Secretary must decide to register, or refuse to register, a person as an ART provider (new s 74(5)).

Under the Bill, the power to cancel a registration generally sits with the Minister (new s 75F), unless the ART provider themselves applies for cancellation of their registration voluntarily. In this case, the Secretary has the power, and indeed must, cancel the registration on application by the ART provider (new s 75E).

In exercising the various powers to consider applications for registration, renewal, amendment or variation, or cancellation of registration, the relevant decision maker may take into account the matters set out in new s 74A (per the Secretary's powers in new ss 74(5), 74D(5), 75AB(5), and the Minister's powers in new s 75F(1)(f) noting the Minister's powers under new s 75F(1)(f) only extend to considering new s 74A(a), (b), (c) or (d)).

New section 74A considerations include (a) whether the applicant has been found guilty of an offence against this Act or the regulations, (b) whether the applicant is of sound financial reputation and stable financial background, (c) the applicant's history of compliance under the ART Act (including any registration conditions under Part 8) or any other Act prescribed in the regulations, (d) whether the applicant has been found guilty of an indictable offence or dishonesty offence in the previous 10 years, (f) if the applicant has ever been a registered ART provider or been involved in the management of a registered ART provider, whether they have been the subject of any complaints, how those complaints have been handled and their past compliance with the ART Act and regulations, and (g) any other prescribed matters. In respect of directors or controlling officers considerations also include: (e) whether the relevant person is suitable to exercise control over the ART provider.

The Minister may cancel the registration of a registered ART provider if satisfied of any of the matters in new s 75F(1) including whether: a registered ART provider has failed to comply with the ART Act, regulations, conditions on registration or requirements of an approved accreditation scheme, there are any circumstances that prevent the provider from being able to continue to carry on as a registered ART provider in the future, the registered ART provider is operating in a manner that poses a serious health and safety risk, or the registered ART provider is no longer a suitable person to hold a registration as a registered ART provider (new ss 75F(1)(a)–(f)). In making a decision to cancel under new s 75F(1), the Minister must have regard to the conduct of the registered ART provider, the seriousness of any failures to comply with the Act, the Regulations and the conditions of registration, and any circumstances that could prevent the registered ART provider from continuing to operate as a registered operator (s 75F(2)(a)–(c)).

The Bill also introduces an "own motion" power for the Secretary to amend or vary the registration of a registered ART provider (new s 75AC). In exercising this power, the Secretary must notify the ART provider of their intention, provide the ART provider an opportunity to provide submissions and must take those submissions into account when making their decision (new s 75AC(2)–(3)).

New sections 80A and 80B provide for Secretary oversight of directors and officers in control of registered ART providers by imposing notification requirements on the body corporate to give written notification to the Secretary in respect of appointment, cessation of employment, or criminal convictions of directors or officers exercising control (new s 80A), and powers for the Secretary to request any information or document that would assist them to determine the suitability of a relevant director or officer to control or manage a registered ART provider (new s 80B).

Right to privacy (section 13)

As outlined above, the right to privacy encompasses rights to informational privacy. In exercising its regulatory powers under the proposed ART Act provisions in the Bill, the relevant decision maker will be empowered to receive and take into account matters which may include personal information of the relevant applicant or ART provider, or personal information of directors or officers of registered ART providers.

To the extent that the Secretary or Minister may impact a natural person's right to privacy in exercising their powers under the Bill, I consider any impacts on the right to privacy are not unlawful or arbitrary. The interference with privacy is authorised under the legislation and is for the purpose of ensuring the appropriateness and suitability of persons accredited to provide assisted reproductive treatment services under

the ART Act. Further, information relating to criminal convictions and financial history (per new ss 74A(a)–(b),(d), (e) 80A(2)), while personally sensitive, is generally information that is commonly provided when satisfying statutory tests that a person is appropriate and suitable for a regulated role. Additionally, a person seeking appointment as an accredited member of a scheme for the purposes of carrying out a profession or who is otherwise undertaking a directorship or controlling officer role is doing so voluntarily and is consequently choosing to engage with a scheme which requires their personal information to be considered.

To the extent that the right to privacy is limited, I am of the view that the limitation is appropriate and proportionate to the legitimate aim of ensuring greater transparency and rigour in the regulation of an industry which provides services of a sensitive nature, including medical procedures, and carries a high risk of potential physical or psychological harm to service users as well as connected persons who may be impacted by the provision of the service, such as a service user's partner or a child born from the procedure. This includes possible harm arising if important governance processes (e.g. informed consent processes) are not properly implemented, or where people delivering these services are not considered appropriate and suitable to do so.

I therefore consider that the relevant clauses which empower the Secretary or Minister to consider or request personal information for the purposes of administering the registration framework are compatible with the right to privacy in section 13 of the Charter.

Right to freedom of expression (section 15(2))

The Bill imposes mandatory obligations on registered ART providers (under new ss 77B(1)–(2)) to not fail to give notice to the Secretary regarding their accreditation being refused or revoked. To the extent that an ART provider may be a natural person, these powers may interfere with the right to freedom of expression, which includes a freedom to not impart information. The notification obligations carry penalties for non-compliance.

While the information gathering powers may impose a limitation on the freedom of expression, I consider that this is a lawful restriction which is reasonably necessary to both protect public health and the rights of others within the meaning of the internal limitation in section 15(3) of the Charter. It is to enable the Secretary to effectively undertake their regulatory oversight functions in relation to registered ART providers, by ensuring critical information about an ART provider's accreditation is provided to the regulator without delay. I note that an ART provider will be voluntarily assuming these obligations and waiving their freedom of expression in this particular context. Accordingly, I am of the view that to the extent the right is limited, that limit falls within section 15(3) of the Charter as it is reasonably necessary to protect public health and the rights of others.

Right to a fair hearing (section 24)

As the administrative decisions with respect to applications for registration, renewal, amendment or variation or cancellation do not involve the conduct of proceedings with parties, I am of the view that these decisions are not decisions to which the fair hearing right applies.

In any event, if a broad reading of section 24(1) is adopted and it is understood that the fair hearing right is engaged by this Bill, this right would nonetheless not be limited. The right to a fair hearing is concerned with the procedural fairness of a decision and the right may be limited if a person faces a procedural barrier to bringing their case before a court, or where procedural fairness is not provided. The entire decision-making process, including reviews and appeals, must be examined in order to determine whether the right is limited.

Should the Secretary exercise their "own motion" power to amend or vary the registration of a registered ART provider (under new s 75AC), they are subject to a show cause process in which the Secretary must notify the ART provider of their intention to exercise their "own motion" power, provide the ART provider an opportunity to provide submissions, and must take those submissions into account when making their decision (new s 75AC(2)–(3)). Further, any decision made by the Secretary to refuse registration, renewal of registration, or to amend or vary registration, or any decision of the Minister to cancel registration is reviewable by VCAT under new provisions in s 116O of the ART Act. This affords applicants and registered ART providers a hearing before an independent and impartial tribunal and satisfies the requirements in section 24(1) of the Charter. As such, I conclude that the fair hearing rights in section 24(1) of the Charter are not limited by this Bill.

Secretary's power to enter and inspect premises

Amended s 119 and new s 119A provide the Secretary expanded powers to enter and inspect premises, including powers to examine any thing (including a document), take photographs or make any type of recording of the premises or any thing at the premises, powers to require a person at the premises to answer any question put to them by the Secretary (see new s 119(3)(d)–(g) and new s 119A(5)(a)–(c)). Amended s 119(2) also provides expanded powers for the Secretary to enter the premises of an existing registered ART provider at any time (no longer confined to during 'ordinary business hours').

While exercising powers of entry in respect of existing registered ART providers, new s 119(3)(f) also provides the Secretary the power to seize and remove any thing that may afford evidence of a contravention of the ART Act, the regulations or a condition of registration. If the Secretary exercises their powers of seizure, they must give the occupier a written record of the seizure and removal and must ensure the seized item is returned within 48 hours (new s 119(4)).

These powers of entry, inspection and seizure are limited, in that the Secretary may only exercise these powers to the extent that it is reasonably necessary to do so for the purpose of determining compliance with a registration under this Act (per existing s 119(1)), or considering the suitability of an application for registration as an ART provider, including in relation to whether conditions should apply to the registration if granted (per new 119A(1)).

Section 119B(1) provides that the Secretary may apply to a magistrate for a warrant to search a particular premises if the Secretary believes on reasonable grounds that treatment procedures are being carried out on those premises and they are not those of a registered ART provider, and that entry to the premises is necessary to investigate a possible contravention of the Act or Regulations. A magistrate may issue a warrant under s 119B(2) and the limits on the right of entry and the search must be specified in the warrant (s 119B(4)).

Right to property (section 20)

The Secretary's right to seize property under amended s 119(3)(f) engages s 20 of the Charter which provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with law. Additionally, if a search warrant is issued by a magistrate to the Secretary pursuant to new s 119B(1), which authorises the Secretary or their delegates to search for any "article, thing or material of a kind named or described in the warrant", the Secretary will be authorised to bring the article, thing or material before the Court so that the matter may be dealt with according to law (per the Magistrate's Court Act 1989, s 78(1)(b)(ii)). In this case, the right to property may be engaged to the extent that executing the warrant may result in the seizure of a person's property.

I am satisfied that the powers which authorise the deprivation of property are conferred by legislation, are formulated precisely, are accessible to the public, are structured and confined only to those items the Secretary considers may afford evidence of a contravention of the ART Act, the regulations or a condition of registration. In respect of s 119(3)(f), the powers of seizure are exercisable in the context of an already limited power of entry, which may only be exercised to the extent that it is reasonably necessary for the purpose of determining compliance with a registration under this Act (per existing s 119(1)). Additionally, the powers under new s 119B(1) are exercisable only with a warrant issued by a court in accordance with the limitations and requirements of the Magistrate's Court Act.

As such I am of the view that the right to property in section 20 of the Charter is not limited, but to the extent that it might be, any limitation is proportionate to and rationally directed at the legitimate aim of the Secretary ensuring compliance with the ART registration regime in order to protect public health and safety.

Right to privacy (section 13(a))

As outlined above, section 13(a) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with, which encompasses the right to informational privacy. The determination of whether certain activities amount to an interference with privacy depends on whether the person has 'a reasonable expectation of privacy' in all the circumstances. In exercising their powers of entry and inspection, the Secretary or its delegate has broad powers to examine any thing, take photographs, make any type of recording of the premises or any thing at the premises, or seize certain items which could contain personal, sensitive or health information, including of staff or clients of an ART provider.

As the premises subject to the powers of entry, inspection and seizure are places of work there is a reduced expectation of privacy in relation to such property and premises. Any expectation of privacy is further diminished by the fact that any current or prospective registered ART provider has voluntarily submitted itself to the oversight of, or consideration for, the regulatory scheme.

Whether exercising these powers under the ART Act or pursuant to a search warrant, I am of the view that the new entry and inspection powers are clearly circumscribed, reasonable and proportionate. For example, prior to exercising entry powers under ss 119 or 119A, the Secretary must advise the occupier of the purpose of their visit, and in the case of a delegate, must produce, on the occupier's request, the delegate's identity card for inspection (existing s 119(2A) and new s 119A(4)). The Secretary's powers are also constrained, in that they may only exercise their powers of entry, inspection or seizure under these sections to the extent that it is 'reasonably necessary to do so' for the purpose of determining compliance with a registration under this Act or considering the suitability of an applicant for registration (existing s 119(1) and new s 119A(1)).

Additionally, the Secretary's powers of entry to premises of an unregistered ART provider are limited in that they may only be exercised pursuant to a search warrant issued by a magistrate. The Secretary may only apply

for a warrant if they believe on reasonable grounds that treatment procedures are being carried out at the premises of an unregistered ART provider and that entry to the premises is necessary for the purpose of investigating a contravention against this Act or the regulations (new s 119B).

Access to any personal information that the Secretary requests or otherwise obtains through the exercise of these powers is not arbitrary, as it is necessarily confined only to information that the Secretary requires for those purposes. To the degree that these powers may intrude into the private sphere, the Secretary and delegates will be obliged to exercise them compatibly with the right to privacy.

I am therefore of the view that any limitation of a person's right to privacy which may arise in the exercise of the Secretary's right of entry and inspection is lawful and not arbitrary. It is appropriate and proportionate to the legitimate aim of safeguarding the health and safety of persons being provided ART treatment procedures and ensuring transparency and rigour in the regulation of an industry which carries a high risk of potential physical or psychological harm to service users or other people engaging with the service provider, and noting the importance of ensuring that persons and organisations providing such services are appropriately suitable and qualified to do so.

Freedom of expression (section 15(2)) and right against self-incrimination (section 25(2)(k))

The Secretary's powers of inspection under amended s 119(3)(g) and new s 119A(5)(c) extend to requiring a person at the premises to answer any question put to them by the Secretary for the prescribed purposes (per existing s 119(1) and new s 119A(1)). Before requiring a person to answer such a question the Secretary must inform the person that they may refuse to answer a question if to do so would tend to incriminate them (new s 119(5) and s 119A(6)). This engages the right to freedom of expression (s 15(2) of the Charter) and the right against self-incrimination (s 25(2)(k) of the Charter).

The right against self-incrimination provides that a person should not be compelled to testify against themselves or to confess guilt. The existence of the Secretary's obligation to advise a person of their right not to answer such a question if to do so would tend to incriminate them promotes their right to protection from self-incrimination, and therefore this right is not limited.

Self-incrimination is the only basis upon which the person can decline to answer such a question from the Secretary, meaning that the right to freedom of expression is limited to the extent that this right extends to a right not to impart information. A person at the premises of an existing registered ART provider will be committing an offence if they refuse to answer a question posed by the Secretary or their delegates pursuant to amended section 119 or new section 119A, if failing to do so is considered to obstruct or hinder the Secretary in the exercise of their powers (per existing section 120 in the ART Act).

While the Secretary's information gathering powers under amended s 119 and new s 119A may impose a limitation on the freedom of expression, the Secretary's powers are limited to requesting information only to the extent that it is "reasonably necessary to do so" for the purpose of determining compliance with a registration under this Act or for considering the suitability of an applicant for registration. To the degree that this power intrudes into the private sphere, the Secretary and their delegates will be obliged to exercise this power compatibly with the right to privacy. I am of the view that any limitation on the right to freedom of expression is proportionate to the legitimate aim of protecting public health and the rights of others, is rationally directed at ensuring the Secretary has the powers necessary for the proper oversight of the registration framework and is a lawful restriction in that falls within the internal limitation in section 15(3) of the Charter.

Amendments to the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (PHW Act)

Notification to Secretary on change to responsible person

The proposed amendment to new s 87(2) of the PHW Act will require that the Secretary be notified within 30 days where there is a change in the "responsible person" for a cooling tower system, or a change in the address or contact details of the responsible person. This may require disclosures of personal information where such disclosures relate to a "natural person".

Rights to privacy (section 13(a)) and freedom of expression (section 15(2))

These powers engage the right privacy in section 13(a) (by requiring personal information to be disclosed) and the right to freedom of expression in section 15(2) (by compelling a person to impart information), however I am of the view that neither right is limited.

A person who has sought to become a 'responsible person' for a registered cooling tower will have done so voluntarily and on the understanding that they are engaging in a regulated regime which has certain requirements and obligations of disclosure.

Accordingly, any interference with the right to privacy or freedom of expression is lawful and (with respect to the right to privacy) not arbitrary in that the disclosure requirements are set out in a clearly articulated legal

regime which is voluntarily assumed by persons who become responsible persons, and which is reasonably necessary to protect public health and the rights of others, by ensuring that the regulator has a current register of persons who carry duties and obligations under the regime.

Amendments to the *Radiation Act 2005*

New Part 6D of the *Radiation Act 2005* provides for the disposal of radiation sources, which includes powers for the Secretary to issue a disposal protocol in respect of radiation sources (new s 67P), provides the ability for a current or former management licence holder to dispose of a radiation source in accordance with a disposal protocol (new s 12(3)), and a new offence provision for failing to dispose of radiation source in accordance with a disposal protocol (new s 67Q).

Right to life (section 9)

The amendments with respect to appropriate disposal of radiation sources are intended to protect human health and the environment from the harmful effects of radiation by ensuring that disused radiation sources are disposed of safely and effectively. Noting the highly detrimental impact on human health and potential threat to human life posed by exposure to unsafe levels of radiation, I consider that the right to life is promoted by these amendments.

Right to property (section 20)

New section 67Q creates an offence for a person to knowingly, recklessly or negligently fail to dispose of the radiation source in accordance with the disposal protocol prepared by the Secretary and published in the Government Gazette. The disposal protocol may include methods and timeframes for the disposal of radiation sources. This offence provision has the effect of compelling a person to dispose of their own property, for example, when a person owns a radiation source which reaches the end of its life. There may be circumstances where a person inadvertently comes into possession of a radiation source if, for example, they find the radiation source or they take control of premises where a radiation source is located. In such circumstances, a person may be required to dispose of the radiation source in accordance with the disposal protocol to avoid committing an offence, thereby depriving another person of their property.

The right to property provides that a person must not be deprived of that person's property other than in accordance with law. While requiring a person to dispose of their own property to avoid committing an offence could amount to a compelled deprivation of property, a person engaging in a regulated regime would already have voluntarily submitted themselves to the terms of engaging in the regime, which includes an obligation to dispose of radiation sources they own at the end of their life. To the extent that this right might be limited by the amendments, I am of the view that any limitation is a lawful restriction in that falls within the internal limitation in section 20 of the Charter. Any potential deprivation of property is clearly conferred by legislation, is confined and structured rather than unclear (in that obligations with respect to method and timeframe for disposal will be clearly defined in the disposal protocol), is accessible to the public, and is formulated precisely. The amendments are therefore consistent with the right to property.

The Hon. Melissa Horne MP
Minister for Health Infrastructure
Minister for Ports and Freight
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence

Statement of treaty compatibility

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (10:51): Under the Statewide Treaty Act 2025, I table a statement of treaty compatibility:

1. In my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the matters set out in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the Bill

2. The Bill will make amendments to regulatory frameworks in four Acts to streamline and strengthen registration and licensing requirements, and to minimise the risk of harm to the health and safety of Victorians. These amendments will impact various entities regulated under these Acts by imposing new obligations on them.

3. The Bill will amend the following Acts:

   3.1 *Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008* (**ART Act**), to require registered ART providers to comply with the requirements of an approved accreditation scheme; amend provisions relating to the registration of registered ART providers to enable the Secretary to grant and

refuse registration and to issue a certificate of registration; and provide the Secretary with further inspection powers;

3.2 *Non-Emergency Patient Transport and First Aid Services Act 2003* (**NEPTFAS Act**), by expanding the scope of the power to make regulations in relation to the application, adoption or incorporation of documents in regulations;

3.3 *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (**PHW Act**), by amending provisions in relation to the registration of cooling tower systems and to clarify that the responsible person in relation to a cooling tower system is the person who owns, manages, or operates it;

3.4 *Radiation Act 2005* (**Radiation Act**), in relation to the disposal of radiation sources by creating an offence provision for improper disposal of radiation sources and a regulatory scheme for the provision of financial assurances.

Consultation with the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl

4. Due to the recent establishment of the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl, it was not possible to give the First Peoples' Assembly the opportunity to advise on the Bill or for the Assembly to otherwise make representations about the effect of the Bill on First Peoples.

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

5. I have considered whether the Bill is compatible with the objects at section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025*:

5.1 advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples; and

5.2 addressing the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation; and

5.3 ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples.

6. In my opinion the Bill does not affect any of the objects in specified in section 66(3)(d)(i)–(iii) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* and is therefore compatible with each of those objects.

7. In my opinion, the Bill does not in its terms deal with First Peoples and does not directly or indirectly in its practical effect engage the human rights or fundamental freedoms of First Peoples.

The Hon. Melissa Horne MP
Minister for Health Infrastructure
Minister for Ports and Freight
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence

Second reading

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (10:51): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Bill will make amendments to regulatory frameworks in three Acts to streamline and strengthen registration and licence requirements, and to prevent or minimise the risk of harm to the health or safety of Victorians.

The reforms outlined in this Bill will be administered and enforced by the Health Regulator, a branch of the Department established in early 2024 to consolidate regulatory functions and enable the Department to adopt a more consistent, risk-based regulatory approach.

Health regulation plays a key role in minimising or preventing risk of harm to the health or safety of Victorians and contributes to the vision of a Victoria free of the avoidable burden of disease and injury, so that all Victorians can enjoy the highest attainable standards of health.

The key priorities addressed by this Bill are:

- To amend the *Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008* to require registered ART providers to comply with the requirements of an approved accreditation scheme; amend provisions relating to the registration of registered ART providers to enable the Secretary to grant and refuse registration and to issue a certificate of registration; and provide the Secretary with further inspection powers

- To amend the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* to ensure the person responsible for a cooling tower, whether owner, manager or operator, takes on key obligations and responsibility for any breaches; and
- To amend the *Radiation Act 2005* to introduce a financial surety scheme to cover the cost of the disposal of radiation sources and create an offence related to the disposal of radiation sources.

The Bill also amends the *Non-Emergency Patient Transport and First Aid Services Act 2003*, to enable documents, such as clinical protocols, to be incorporated into the Regulations as in force from time to time.

Assisted reproductive treatment accreditation, registration and inspection powers

The Bill also makes amendments to the *Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008* (ART Act), to support implementation of reforms recommended by the Rapid Review of Assisted Reproductive Technology and In Vitro Fertilisation Regulation and Accreditation in Australia (the Rapid Review).

The Rapid Review was commissioned by the HMM in June 2025 following two prominent mistaken embryo transfers and related public discussion about safety and quality in the sector. Ministers agreed to its recommendations in September 2025.

The first phase of reform identified by the Rapid Review is centred on establishing a new national accreditation scheme for assisted reproductive treatment (ART) providers, administered by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission).

The amendments to the ART Act in this Bill will ensure that the Victorian legislative and regulatory framework is ready to align with the national accreditation framework and standards, which are being developed by the Commission.

Currently, the Act effectively requires ART providers to be accredited by the Reproductive Technology Accreditation Committee (RTAC) in order to be registered and operate lawfully in Victoria. The Bill will replace those provisions with a requirement for registered providers to comply with an accreditation scheme approved by the Secretary to the Department of Health. It is intended that the scheme administered by the Commission will be approved by the Secretary for this purpose.

The Bill will also strengthen Victoria's regulatory scheme by ensuring that the registration framework operates independently from the accreditation scheme.

Under the current registration provisions, the Secretary has no discretion to refuse an application from a provider that has been accredited by RTAC. Further, while there is power to suspend registration of an accredited provider, there is no power to cancel that registration.

The Bill will give the Secretary a full suite of discretionary powers to grant, renew, vary, or refuse ART provider registration applications based on specified assessment criteria. This ensures that the decision about whether a provider has legal authority to operate in Victoria rests clearly with the regulator, as appropriate. The Bill also introduces a power for the Minister to cancel registration on specified grounds.

The Bill defers commencement of the offence for failure to comply with Conditions on Registration, to allow the current Conditions on Registration to be reviewed and updated in alignment with upcoming new national accreditation standards before the offence applies. In the interim, the current Conditions on Registration continue to apply and a range of enforcement actions are available for non-compliance.

The existing provisions concerning suspension of registration and imposition of conditions on registration will be slightly altered, to align to the other registration powers and ensure that the Secretary has the full suite of powers necessary to effectively manage the registration of ART providers.

These registration powers will be supported by enhanced inspection powers for the Secretary or their delegate. Current provisions allow inspection only for the purposes of considering compliance by providers already registered and are limited to inspection of documents during business hours.

The updated powers in the Bill provide for inspections of the premises of a registered ART provider or an applicant for registration, to inform registration decisions or compliance monitoring and enforcement. They also allow inspection of the premises beyond documentation where relevant. In addition, the Bill introduces a process for application to the Magistrate's Court for a warrant in relation to other premises (not belonging to a registered provider or applicant for registration) where there is reason to believe ART is being carried out.

The Rapid Review found that the current industry-led accreditation scheme is inadequate and lacks the transparency and rigour that governments and the community expect. Ministers agreed that the reforms offer a pathway to restore confidence, independence, and transparency in the ART sector. The Gorton Review of ART in Victoria similarly highlighted the importance for clearer separation between accreditation and regulatory oversight. The amendments to the ART Act in this Bill will put Victoria in a position to effectively

enable the agreed reforms and strengthen Victoria's ability to uphold community expectations of the ART sector.

In developing the Bill, the Department of Health has liaised with ART providers and sector stakeholders, as well as the Commission and other jurisdictions. Victoria is committed to successful implementation of this first phase of reform and will continue to actively engage in the recommended program of national improvements in regulation of this sector.

Responsibility for cooling tower systems

This Bill also proposes important reforms to Victoria's public health framework by clarifying responsibility for the registration, management and maintenance of cooling tower systems.

Cooling towers are often used for evaporative cooling in large buildings, including residential towers and big industrial or commercial sites. They are a recognised source of risk for the transmission of Legionella bacteria, which can cause Legionnaire's disease, a potentially fatal form of pneumonia. Victoria regulates cooling tower systems to manage this public health risk. All cooling towers must be registered under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*.

Currently the owner of the land on which there is a cooling tower system is required to prepare and implement a risk management plan and to ensure the plan is audited annually by an approved auditor. This obligation does not always match the operational reality, which is that the entity with effective control and management of the cooling tower system may be a property or facilities management company, a lessee, occupier or owners corporation that is separate from the landowner.

The proposed amendments will require the responsible person, defined as the person who owns, manages or controls a cooling tower system, to assume obligations such as registration, development and review of a risk management plan and annual audits.

This approach ensures that primary responsibility for cooling tower safety is clearly identified, enforceable and aligned with practical control of cooling towers, taking into account contemporary building ownership and management practices. This change will attribute responsibility appropriately and enable effective compliance oversight, targeting the person whose acts or omissions create a public health risk.

These reforms are designed to improve regulatory clarity, not to impose unnecessary new burdens. The Bill complements existing regulatory requirements for cooling towers, including ongoing obligations relating to inspection, cleaning, disinfection and record-keeping, as set out in Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2017.

By making responsibility explicit, the Bill reduces uncertainty for industry, improves compliance, and supports timely regulatory intervention where risks arise. Ultimately, this reform will contribute to safer buildings and better protection for Victorians from preventable disease.

Financial surety and obligations in relation to disposal of disused radiation sources

This Bill also makes targeted amendments to the Radiation Act 2005 to strengthen Victoria's radiation safety framework.

Radioactive sources are used safely across Victoria in healthcare, research and industry and deliver significant public benefit. However, once a source becomes disused, there is no ongoing justification for its continued possession, and unmanaged or abandoned sources pose risks to human health and the environment.

While existing licence conditions require disposal, experience has shown that disposal does not always occur in a timely manner. In some cases, the government is required to intervene to manage or store disused sources, with the associated risks and costs borne by the community.

These amendments introduce a financial surety regime for the management of disused radioactive sources. The purpose of the reform is to ensure that licence holders make adequate provision for the safe and lawful disposal of radioactive sources when they are no longer fit for an authorised purpose.

The amendments enable the Secretary of the Department of Health to require a financial surety, where appropriate, when granting or renewing a radiation management licence. The framework is risk-based and proportionate and ensures that funds are available to support safe disposal if a licence holder fails to meet their obligations.

The Bill also provides for disposal protocols to be issued by the Secretary and introduces offences for noncompliance, ensuring the framework is effective and enforceable.

These reforms align Victoria's legislation with nationally agreed radiation protection standards and apply a well-established regulatory principle used elsewhere in Victoria's health and environmental laws: that those who create or control risk should be responsible for managing and funding that risk.

This Bill will enable the Health Regulator to more effectively minimise risks to the health and safety of Victorians.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:51): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday 17 June.

Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026

Statement of charter compatibility

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:53): Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility:

Opening paragraphs

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

In my opinion, the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

On 15 April 2026, the High Court handed down its decision in *Hopper v Victoria* [2026] HCA 11 (*Hopper*).

In *Hopper*, the High Court found that Victoria's political donations and expenditure laws contained at Part 12 of the *Electoral Act 2002* (Act), was wholly invalid as it impermissibly burdened the implied freedom of political communication, contrary to the Commonwealth Constitution.

The High Court declared Part 12 of the Act invalid in its entirety, as it was not permissible to sever any parts of provisions, subdivisions or divisions of Part 12 to preserve its validity.

In light of the High Court's finding in *Hopper*, the purpose of this Bill is to amend the Act to introduce a new political donations, State funding and reporting regime (proposed regime).

The new regime applies to registered political parties, candidates at an election, elected members, associated entities and third-party campaigners (collectively, 'regulated person or body').

The key reforms in the Bill include:

a. setting a $7,500 general cap on political donations to a regulated person or body;

b. setting a higher general cap of $15,000 for eligible new entrants to the electoral process;

c. prohibiting political donations from foreign sources;

d. prohibiting anonymous political donations equal to or above the value of $1,250;

e. requiring that political donations equal to or above $1,250 be disclosed to the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) within 7 days.

f. requiring regulated persons or bodies to provide annual returns containing financial information to the VEC;

g. providing powers for the VEC to compel the production of documents or require a person to give evidence in relation to compliance with the proposed regime;

h. prescribing offences and penalties relating to non-compliance, including introducing prospective criminal liability for any failure to disclose certain political donations made between 15 April 2026 and the day the Bill receives Royal Assent; and

i. make State funding available to eligible registered political parties, independent candidates and independent elected members.

Human Rights Issues

Human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill

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

- right to recognition and equality before the law (section 8 of the Charter);
- right to privacy (section 13(a) of the Charter);
- right to freedom of expression (section 15 of the Charter);
- right to take part in public life (section 18 of the Charter); and
- right to property (section 20 of the Charter).

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

Right to equality and protection from discrimination (section 8 of the Charter)

Section 8(2) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to enjoy their human rights without discrimination. Section 8(3) of the Charter provides that every person is entitled to equal protection of the law without discrimination and has the right to equal and effective protection against discrimination.

'Discrimination' under the Charter is defined by reference to the definition in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Equal Opportunity Act), on the basis of an attribute in section 6 of that Act, which includes race. Relevantly, the definition of 'race' in the Equal Opportunity Act includes 'nationality or national origin'.

Ban on foreign donations

Clause 5 of the Bill will insert new section 209 into the Act to make it unlawful to make or accept a political donation if the donor is not an Australian Citizen or Resident, or in the case of a donor who is not a natural person, where the donor does not have an Australian Business Number.

The ban on foreign donations limits the right to equality before the law as it prohibits the rights of persons to make a political donation on the basis of nationality. However, it is a lawful restriction within the meaning of the Charter, as it is reasonably necessary to prevent foreign governments, corporations or individuals exercising influence on Victoria's political system through donations to regulated persons or entities. This proposal supports national sovereignty by restricting the influence that non-Australians have over Victorian politics and elections.

Right to Privacy (Section 13(a) of the Charter)

Section 13(1) of the Charter states that a person has the right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. An interference will be lawful if it is permitted by a law which is precise and appropriately circumscribed, and will be arbitrary only if it is capricious, unpredictable, unjust or unreasonable, in the sense of being disproportionate to the legitimate aim sought.

Anonymous donations and requirement to provide disclosure returns

Clause 5 of the Bill will insert new section 210 into the Act to make it unlawful to make or accept an anonymous political donation equal to or above $1,250. This amendment engages the right to privacy as it requires a person to divulge their name and address if they wish to make a political donation which is equal to or above the threshold.

Clause 5 will also insert new section 216 into the Act to require that a disclosure return be provided to the VEC in relation to any political donation equal to or above the disclosure threshold of $1,250. The disclosure return must include the name and residential address of the donor. New section 217 requires that that VEC publish the disclosure return on its website (which would include the name but not the residential address of the donor) within 14 days of its receipt.

These amendments also engage the right to privacy as the names and addresses of people who donate above the threshold must be provided to the VEC, and the names of each these donors will then be published on the VEC's website.

While both the anonymous donations and requirement to provide disclosure returns amendments engage the right to privacy, in both cases, the interference is lawful as it is authorised under legislation. Further the interferences are not arbitrary, as they are reasonable and proportionate to the legitimate objective of supporting transparency and reducing the possibility of regulated persons or bodies working in the interests of anonymous donors.

Powers of the Commission

Clause 5 will insert new section 255 into the Act to provide a VEC compliance officer with the power to serve a notice requiring a regulated person or entity to produce documents or other things, or to appear before a compliance officer to give evidence. A notice may only be served on a regulated person or body or on any other person if the compliance officer has reasonable grounds to believe the person is capable of giving evidence in relation to a possible contravention.

These powers engage the rights to privacy as they could be used to require a person to divulge private or personal information to the VEC. However, the interference is lawful as the powers are clearly prescribed in the Bill. The powers are not arbitrary as the power is reasonable and justifiable as it enables the VEC to conduct investigations and encourages compliance with the scheme.

Freedom of expression

Section 15(1) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to hold an opinion without interference. Section 15(2) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to freedom of expression which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, whether within or outside Victoria and includes information imparted orally or in writing.

General cap on political donations

Clause 5 of the Bill inserts new section 212 into the Act, to provide for a general cap on political donations. The general cap is $7,500 (subject to indexation) or any higher amount prescribed by regulations. The donations cap applies to one off-donations and to aggregated donations from a single donor to the same regulated person or body within a 4-year election period (new section 213).

The donations cap engages the right to freedom of expression by limiting the funds available for people or bodies covered by the scheme to engage in political communication and by limiting a person's ability to donate and engage in political communication.

However, to the extent this clause limits freedom of expression, it is reasonable and demonstrably justified as it reduces the risk of corruption and undue influence in the political process.

If political donations were not capped, then a person or body could use their wealth to have a disproportionate impact on elections. In this manner, the donations cap promotes the right to freedom of expression by allowing for a greater number of people to express their political views.

Ban on political donations from foreign sources

The ban on foreign donations in new section 209 (discussed above) engages the right to freedom of expression by preventing foreign nationals from engaging in political communication through a political donation. However, this is a lawful restriction within the meaning of the Charter, as it is reasonably necessary to address concerns about interference from foreign sources in elections, and it prevents foreign governments, corporations or individuals exercising influence on Victoria's political system through donations to regulated persons or bodies.

The cap on the number of third-party campaigners to whom a donor can donate

Clause 5 of the Bill inserts new section 211 into the Act to limit the number of third-party campaigners to which a donor may make a political donation. This limits a donor's freedom of political expression by restricting the number of third-party campaigners to whom a person can donate.

The purpose of the amendment is to prevent the proliferation of third-party campaigners as a means to exceed the general cap, whereby donors could seek to split their political donations among a large number of third-party campaigners.

To the extent that this clause limits the right to freedom of expression, it is reasonable and demonstrably justified to ensure the integrity of the general cap and prevent its effectiveness being undermined. The general cap will, in turn, reduce the risk of undue influence in the political process and encourage equal participation in the electoral process.

Further, clause 5 of the Bill will insert into new section 206 of the Act, under the definition of "third party campaigner" an example that provides if a third party campaigner incurs political or electoral expenditure for general advertising and awareness raising, for the benefit of a registered political party (RPP), candidate, group, elected member or associated entity, the making of this expenditure is not a gift. This is to ensure that restrictions on donations to third-party campaigners are not inadvertently captured by the definition of "gift", and subject to associated restrictions, where they are not incurred by a person or entity for the benefit of, or that otherwise benefits, one or more other persons or entities.

Payment of public funding

Clause 5 will insert new section 227 into the Act to enable the payment of public funding to eligible registered political parties and independent candidates. A party or candidate will be eligible for public funding where they contested the previous general election and were elected or, one or more candidates received at least 4% of the first preference votes (new section 227(3)).

Registered political parties and independent candidates who qualified for public funding for the previous election, will also be eligible for instalment payments of equivalent public funding in advance of the next election (new section 232). Public funding supports electoral parties and members to focus their efforts on participation in parliamentary processes by meeting the administrative costs associated with being an elected representative. It also reduces the reliance on political donations which provide disproportionate power to people with the financial resources to donate. Public funding therefore promotes the right to freedom of expression by enabling more people to participate in the electoral process.

The public funding amendments also limit freedom of expression by restricting public funding to parties and independent candidates who satisfy the eligibility criteria, which in turn, decreases the capacity of members and supporters of smaller parties to contribute ideas and opinions into the political debate.

To the extent this clause burdens the right to freedom of expression, it is a lawful restriction within the meaning of the Charter, as it is reasonably necessary to prevent candidates or parties from receiving payments if they only receive a handful of votes, make no substantial contribution to the democratic process, or have little intention of engaging in electoral competition.

New entrant general cap

Clause 5 will insert new Division 5 of Part 12 into the Act to introduce the new entrant general cap for eligible candidates. An independent candidate and RPPs will be eligible where they are ineligible to receive other sources of funding under the Act, including public funding, administrative expenditure funding, and policy development funding.

Resultantly, the new entrant general cap will apply to first-time independent candidates, recontesting independent candidates who received less than 4% of the first preference votes at the most recent election, and new or first-time RPPs which have been registered for less than a whole calendar year. The purpose of the new provision is to reduce barriers for eligible electoral participants by ensuring they have access to increased funds for political expenditure, despite not being eligible for a stream of State funding.

Previously, due to ineligibility for State funding streams, these participants were wholly reliant on political donations but subject to the same cap as all participants, resulting in them having access to less funds for political expenditure. The availability of funding through the new entrant general cap therefore promotes the right to freedom of expression by enabling new people and RPPs to participate in the electoral process.

Right to take part in public life (Section 18)

Section 18(1) of the Charter provides that a person has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination, to participate in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

Further, section 18(2) of the Charter provides that every eligible person has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination to (a) vote and be elected at periodic State and municipal elections that guarantee the free expression of the will of the electors; and (b) have access, on general terms of equality, to the Victorian public service and public office.

General cap on political donations and limitation on anonymous donations

The donations cap and limitation on anonymous donations engage the right to take part in public life as these reforms place limitations on the way in which a person may participate in the conduct of public affairs through a political donation.

However, any limitation on the right to take part in public life imposed by these amendments is reasonably and demonstrably justified as the amendments will reduce the risk and public perception of corruption and undue influence in the political process.

The donations cap also reduces the disproportionate influence of people with significant financial resources to influence elections, thereby providing the opportunity for others to participate in the conduct of public affairs.

Payment of public funding

A party or candidate will only be eligible for public funding where they contested the previous general election and were elected or otherwise received a total first preference vote of at least 4% of votes given in that election.

The right to take part in public life may be burdened as those candidates who are not eligible for funding will be less able to convey the opinions and policy preferences of their supporters. Additionally, those candidates will be less able to provide information to electors which will in turn impair the information available to voters for future elections.

To the extent that the entitlement to public funding burdens the right to take part in public life, it is a lawful restriction within the meaning of the Charter, as it is reasonably necessary to prevent candidates or parties from receiving instalment payments if they only receive a handful of votes, make no substantial contribution to the democratic process, or have little intention of engaging in electoral competition.

Further, public funding will reduce the reliance on political donations, which disproportionately favour those with the financial resources to donate. In this manner, public funding enhances the right to partake in public life by enabling more people to participate in the conduct of public affairs.

Clause 5 also inserts new section 233, that provides a discretionary power for the VEC to seek repayment in instalments or waive repayments for candidates that are no longer eligible to receive public funding for the next general election, in circumstances where repayment of overpaid advance public funding may cause serious financial hardship, or in other circumstances deemed relevant by the VEC. The inclusion of this power enhances the right to take part in public life by ensuring that parties are not deterred from accessing public funding to participate in the election process merely on the basis of risk of financial hardship where repayments may be required.

New entrant general cap

New entrant general cap under new section 247 will enhance the right to take part in public life under s 18(2) of the Charter by enabling new people and RPPs to participate in the conduct of public affairs, such as greater opportunities to run successful campaigns and be elected at State elections, despite being ineligible for State funding. Therefore, the new entrant general cap will address the burdens on the right under section 18(2) flowing from eligibility limitations for State funding under the Act, by providing access to another source of funding where eligibility requirements are met.

Right to property (Section 20)

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with law.

Powers of the VEC

The right to property is engaged through the VEC's power to serve a notice requiring a specified person to produce evidence, documents or other things in new section 255. This allows the VEC to deprive a person of their property rights where the property would be relevant to assessing disclosure with the regime.

The VEC's right to deprive a person of their personal property is clearly conferred by the Bill. As such, any deprivation of property would be clearly in accordance with the law, and therefore compatible with the Charter.

Further, clause 5 inserts new offence provisions at sections 278, 279, 280, 281 and 282 into the Act to require certain amounts to be disclosed and in some cases returned. These include unlawful political donations (e.g. those exceeding the general cap) and certain specified gifts received that are greater than the donations cap under new Part 12 of the Act, received between 15 April 2026 (the date that the High Court handed down its decision in *Hopper*) and the day the Bill receives the Royal Assent. Where disclosures or returns are required, this is to occur within 30 days after the day the Bill receives royal assent. New section 277 also requires the return of certain amounts received by RPPs from their Nominated Entities between 1 July 2023 and 14 April 2026 before the 2026 State election. New section 215 also requires forfeiture to the State of political donations accepted in contravention of new Division 2 of Part 12, including any foreign donations, anonymous donations above the $1,250, donations above the general cap.

These amendments engage the right to property as a person would be required to repay any money, which is a form of property, to the donor, or forfeit amounts to the State. However, this would be clearly in accordance with the law, as it would be clearly prescribed in the Bill. Further, the amendment would not be arbitrary, as it is for the legitimate purpose of ensuring that regulated persons or bodies do not have an unfair advantage by receiving a donation which is unlawful or above the old general cap, prior to the new regime being introduced.

Conclusion

I consider that the Bill is compatible with the Charter because, to the extent that some of the provisions may limit human rights, those limitations are reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

The Hon. Jacinta Allan MP
Premier

Statement of treaty compatibility

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:53): Under the Statewide Treaty Act 2025, I table a statement of treaty compatibility:

1. In my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the matters set out in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* (Treaty Act). I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the Bill

2. On 15 April 2026, the High Court handed down its decision in *Hopper v Victoria* [2026] HCA 11 (*Hopper*). In *Hopper*, the High Court found that Victoria's political donations and expenditure laws contained at Part 12 of the *Electoral Act 2002* (Act), was wholly invalid as it impermissibly burdened the implied freedom of political communication, contrary to the Commonwealth Constitution.
3. The High Court declared Part 12 of the Act invalid in its entirety, as it was not permissible to sever any parts of provisions, subdivisions or divisions of Part 12 to preserve its validity.
4. In light of the High Court's finding in *Hopper*, the purpose of this Bill is to amend the Act to introduce a new political donations, State funding and reporting regime (the regime). The new regime applies to registered political parties (RPPs), candidates at an election, elected members, associated entities and third-party campaigners.

Consultation with the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl

5. The First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl (Assembly) was not given an opportunity to advise on the Bill and the Assembly did not otherwise make representations about the Bill's effect on First Peoples.
6. The Assembly was not given an opportunity to advise on the Bill, as section 66 of the Treaty Act commenced on 1 May 2026, and the Assembly only became operational on Monday 4 May. Considering this timeframe, there was insufficient time to seek advice from the Assembly prior to the introduction of the Bill into Parliament.
7. As consultation with the Assembly was not undertaken, I am not able to make an assessment as to whether the Bill is consistent with any advice given or representations made by the Assembly.

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

8. In my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the following objects set out at section 66(3)(d) of the Treaty Act:
   - 8.1 advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples;
   - 8.2 addressing the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation; and
   - 8.3 ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples.

Advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples (section 66(3)(d)(i))

9. The inherent rights of First Peoples, including the right to self-determination, are recognised by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
10. The First Peoples' Assembly, as it existed prior to the commencement of the Treaty Act, identified that the right to self-determination for First Peoples includes political self-determination, which provides First Peoples with the right to self-government and the power to organise and direct their lives according to their own values, institutions and mechanisms within the framework of the state of which they are a part.
11. The Bill may indirectly limit the achievement of political determination for First Peoples by imposing obligations and limitations on political donations, including donations made by First Peoples, to First Peoples, or to political parties or candidates who represent First Peoples' interests. These limitations include:

11.1 setting a $5,030 general cap on political donations to a regulated person or body from 15 April 2026 until 28 November 2026, and a $7,500 general cap from 29 November 2026 onwards (new sections 212 and 288);

11.2 setting a $10,060 general cap on political donations to eligible electoral participants (new entrant general cap) from 15 April 2026 until 28 November 2026, and a $20,000 general cap to eligible new entrants from 29 November 2026 onwards (new section 247, with sections 212 and 288);

11.3 prohibiting political donations equal to or above the value of $1,250 from anonymous sources (new section 210);

11.4 prohibiting political donations from foreign sources (new section 209); and

11.5 limiting the number of third-party campaigners a donor may make a political donation to (new section 211).

12. The Bill could also limit the achievement of political determination for First Peoples by limiting eligibility for public funding to circumstances where a political party or independent candidate contested the previous general election, and one or more candidates received at least 4% of the first preference votes (new section 227).

13. Restricting public funding to parties and independent candidates who satisfy the eligibility criteria, could, in turn decrease the capacity of members and supporters of smaller parties (including parties representing the interests of First Peoples), and independent candidates who are first peoples from contributing to political debate.

14. Despite the limitation on the right to political self-determination, the Bill is nonetheless compatible with the object of advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples, as the limitation is reasonably justifiable in the circumstances for the following reasons:

14.1 The limitations and restrictions on political donations and payments of public funding apply equally to all Victorians, including First Peoples and non–First Peoples.

14.2 The restrictions and limitations on political donations serve the overall purpose of increasing the transparency and integrity of Victoria's electoral system.

14.3 The payment of public funding reduces the reliance on political donations which provide disproportionate powers to people with the financial resources to donate. Public funding therefore enables more people to participate in the electoral process, including First Peoples.

14.4 The restrictions on the payment of public funding are reasonably necessary to prevent candidates or parties from receiving payments if they only receive a handful of votes, make no substantial contribution to the democratic process, or have little intention of engaging in electoral competition.

14.5 The new entrant general cap for eligible independent candidates or RPPs under new section 247 will enable persons ineligible for State funding streams, including First Peoples, to have access to alternative forms of funding for their political campaign and reduce barriers for new entrants, providing greater opportunities to participate in the electoral process. The restrictions on eligibility are reasonably necessary to ensure that new entrant general cap is only available to candidates or RPPs that are ineligible for other forms of State funding.

Addressing unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation

15. The Yoorrook Justice Commission's 'Truth be Told' report describes the effects of colonisation on First Peoples. It describes how the gap between outcomes for First Peoples and other Victorians in areas including life expectancy, education, and health is caused by the impacts of colonisation in the past, which continue today.

16. The Bill may have an impact on the disadvantaged inflicted on First Peoples by imposing restrictions and limitations on political donations and by restricting eligibility for public funding (discussed above). These amendments could restrict the funding received by political parties represented by First Peoples, candidates who are First Peoples or people who represent First Peoples' interests.

17. Despite the possible limitation on the object of addressing unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation, the Bill is nonetheless compatible with this object for the following reasons:

17.1 As the amendments apply equally to First Peoples and non–First Peoples, it is unlikely to have further impact on the disadvantage faced by First Peoples; and

17.2 The regime serves the overall purpose of increasing the transparency and integrity of Victoria's electoral system, and the restrictions imposed are proportionate to this overall purpose.

Ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples

18. A Bill may affect the equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms by First Peoples where, in its express terms or practical effect, it has a differential effect on First Peoples as compared to non–First Peoples.

19. As the Bill does not in its terms deal with First Peoples, and does not directly or indirectly in its practical effect engage the human rights or fundamental freedoms of First Peoples, the Bill is compatible with this object.

The Hon. Jacinta Allan MP
Premier

Second reading

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:53): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Victorian Government is deeply committed to protecting and strengthening Victoria's democratic systems by ensuring that integrity, transparency, accountability, and fairness underpin our electoral processes and electoral system. This Bill achieves this very purpose by introducing a new legal framework for the regulation of political donations, State funding, and reporting, which is currently absent from the *Electoral Act 2002 (the Act)* following the High Court's decision in *Hopper v State of Victoria*. On 15 April 2026 the High Court ruled that the old Part 12 of the Act, which contained the former legal framework for Victoria's political finance and donations scheme, is wholly invalid.

Without this Bill, Victoria's political finance environment remains entirely unregulated, leaving this State without laws to govern how political money is raised and disclosed. This regulatory vacuum jeopardises the core principles of our democracy by opening the door to hidden influences and leaving our system vulnerable to unchecked political spending. This fundamentally undermines public confidence in the fairness of this State's electoral processes and outcomes. This Government is committed to restoring and safeguarding that confidence through this Bill. We cannot afford to let an unregulated environment persist as we approach the next election and to expose our democratic system to the risk of improper conduct.

To protect our institutions and the integrity of the electoral process, this Bill establishes clear, enforceable boundaries to support fair, transparent, and efficient elections, delivered in partnership with the Victorian Electoral Commission. The Bill achieves this by introducing:

- a rigorous political donations disclosure and reporting scheme;
- strict caps on political donations;
- a complete ban on foreign donations and clear limits on anonymous donations;
- transparent State funding provisions; and
- a robust compliance and enforcement framework with penalties for infringing the law.

These reforms will prevent improper influence in our political process. The reforms will ensure that Victorian election outcomes are determined by the voices of voters and not by the depth of certain pockets. Crucially, these measures will reduce any disparities arising between electoral participants due to unequal access to financial resources. And most importantly, political funding will become visible to the public to support broader confidence in the electoral system and to ensure our citizens can make informed decisions.

I will now turn to the details contained in the Bill.

Application of the regime

The regime introduced by the Bill will apply to any individual or entity that makes or receives political donations. This will include registered political parties, candidates, groups of candidates, elected members, associated entities, third party campaigners, and donors.

An associated entity will be defined as an entity that is associated with a political party by financial membership, registration, voting rights, control or purpose, with the purpose threshold being an entity which operates wholly or to a significant extent for the benefit of a political party. Unions, think-tanks and

fundraising entities are examples of associated entities. As also outlined in the Explanatory Memorandum, entities that were nominated entities under old Part 12 will be regulated in the same manner as an associated entity for the purposes of the Bill, and will be subject to the same limitations and restrictions.

A third party campaigner will be defined as a person or entity who is not a candidate, elected member, group, political party or associated entity, but who receives political donations exceeding $7,500 or incurs more than $7,500 of political expenditure in a financial year. A third party campaigner could include a range of large or small activist or public interest groups, who are not aligned with a particular political party but engage in political campaigns.

A group will be defined as two or more candidates who are grouped on a ballot-paper, such as grouped Legislative Council candidates.

Activity regulated by the regime

Activities relating to political donations and political expenditure will be covered by the regime.

A political donation will include gifts of money, property, and services made without consideration or with inadequate consideration to a political party, candidate, group, elected member and in some cases, an associated entity or third party campaigner. A gift to an associated entity or third party campaigner will only be a political donation if it is for the purpose of incurring or reimbursing political expenditure. Political donations will also include the payment of an amount in respect of a guarantee and payment or contribution at a fundraising function. However, annual levies, subscription and affiliation fees will not be considered political donations, nor will gifts made in a private capacity for personal use or volunteer labour.

Political expenditure will be defined as any expenditure for the dominant purpose of directing how a person should vote at an election by promoting or opposing a candidate, political party or elected member. It does not include expenditure by an associated entity or third party campaigner disseminated outside the election campaigning period unless it refers to a candidate or political party or how a person should vote.

Advertising and raising awareness about issues, without promoting or opposing a candidate or political party, will not be considered political expenditure. The broadcasting, production or publication of an advertisement relating to an election will be defined as electoral expenditure under the Bill.

The provision of labour is only taken to be political expenditure if the dominant purpose of the labour is to create or communicate electoral matter. For example, if Charlotte is the chief executive officer of a not-for-profit organisation that encourages healthy eating and occasionally issues material to influence how electors vote, but Charlotte's primary role is the delivery of healthy eating programs in schools and workplaces, as the dominant purpose of Charlotte's employment is not to create or communicate electoral matters, her salary is not taken to be political expenditure.

Political expenditure has been defined in this way to ensure that all Victorians maintain their right to engage in public discussion on policy matters that are important to them, with an ability to advertise and raise awareness about an issue without it being considered political expenditure, so long as it does not promote or oppose a candidate or political party.

Caps and bans on political donations

To address concerns about foreign influences in elections and consistent with our system of representative and responsible government, the Bill will introduce a complete ban on foreign donations, regardless of the amount of the donation. It will be unlawful for a donor to make, or an entity to accept, a political donation unless the donor is an Australian resident or citizen, or has a relevant business number if the donor is not a person.

The Bill will also make it unlawful to accept anonymous political donations over $1,250 to improve transparency and operate as an anti-avoidance measure. This will preserve the integrity of the electoral process and prevent avoidance of disclosure and reporting requirements. This is consistent with reporting thresholds in other Australian jurisdictions.

Unregulated and excessive private funding poses risks of corruption and undue influence.

These types of unlawful donations, if accepted between 15 April and the day the Bill receives Royal Assent, will be required to be disclosed and forfeited to the State.

From 29 November 2026, the Bill will set a cap of $7,500, or a higher amount provided in the regulations, for each four-year election period on political donations made or received from the same source. The Bill will introduce a separate, interim cap of $5,030 for the period from 15 April 2026 until 28 November 2026, which is the date of the 2026 general election. Donations made above the interim general cap between 15 April and the day the Bill receives Royal Assent will be required to be returned.

Political donations caps allow individuals or entities to express their support without the risk of undue influence, supporting equal participation in the electoral process. Caps will apply to all electoral participants without discrimination, including nominated entities operating as associated entities under the new regime.

It will also be unlawful to make political donations to more than six third party campaigners for each election period, to prevent a proliferation of third party campaigners as a means to circumvent the cap.

New entrant general cap

The Bill introduces a double general cap for eligible electoral participants, called the new entrant general cap. This will be an interim amount of $10,060 from 15 April 2026 until 28 November 2026, and $15,000 from 29 November 2026 for each four-year election period on political donations. As with the general cap, amounts can be increased by regulations and are subject to indexation.

Eligible electoral participants will be those ineligible for State funding, including recontesting independent candidates who received less than 4% of first preference votes the previous election, first-time independent candidates and new registered political parties who have not been registered a whole calendar year.

Applicants seeking to be subject to the new entrant general cap must apply to the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC), with the required information as set out in the Bill. Within 30 days of receiving an application the VEC must provide confirmation of eligibility or ineligibility. The VEC will be required to maintain a Register of New Entrants, published on its Internet site, which sets out those who have previously received or are eligible to receive political donations at or below the new entrant general cap.

The purpose of the new entrant general cap is to reduce barriers for those ineligible for a form of State funding, ensuring they have access to other means to fund their campaign without being constrained by the former general cap.

Small contributions

The Bill includes a small contributions exemption, which designed to be a practical way to ensure the donations scheme is not unduly onerous on those people that make minor contributions to entities covered by the regime. It will prevent a donor or recipients from inadvertently breaching the disclosure requirements or general cap, through making contributions of $100 or less, or a higher amount prescribed by the regulations, at events such as party meetings or events.

Disclosure of political donations

Victorians need to know who makes and receives political donations, in a timely manner, to monitor the potential risk that donors are influencing political decisions. The Bill includes a requirement for political donations and loans equal to or above $1,250 to be disclosed to the VEC by both the donor and recipient, with this amount indexed over time. Multiple donations from the same source or related companies will be treated as a single donation. Disclosure must occur in "real time", with disclosure returns submitted to the VEC within 7 days of either making or receiving a political donation. The VEC will publish disclosure returns on its website within 14 days of receipt, supporting transparency in our political system.

Acknowledging the period of time since old Part 12 was invalidated in *Hopper*, the Bill will include disclosure and reporting obligations in relation to political donations made and received between 15 April 2026 and the day the Bill receives Royal Assent, with donations in some cases required to be returned.

In addition to real time reporting, annual returns must be provided to the VEC by political parties, associated entities and third party campaigners. The returns will include amounts received and paid, as well as the total debts incurred as at 30 June. The registered agents of candidates, groups and elected members must also provide an annual return to the VEC which sets out particulars of donations received above the $1,250 disclosure threshold.

The VEC will publish annual returns on its website within 6 months after the end of the relevant financial year.

Recipients of political donations will be required to keep a State campaign account to differentiate fundraising and expenses associated with an election, from other financial flows. Only funds in the state campaign account can be used to incur political expenditure. The State campaign account will be required to be denominated in Australian dollars, implementing recommendation 5.10 of the Electoral Review Expert Panel's 2023 *Report on Victoria's laws on political finance and electronic assisted voting*.

State funding

In recognition that political donation caps reduce how much money electoral participants can raise, the Bill will provide for state funding. State funding will be comprised of public funding, administrative expenditure funding and policy development funding.

- Public funding will reimburse eligible political parties and independent candidates for costs relating to running a state election. Registered political parties running a joint Legislative Council ticket will be able to jointly nominate how public funding associated with the ticket is apportioned between them, implementing recommendation 6.9 of the Electoral Review Expert Panel's 2023 *Report on Victoria's laws on political finance and electronic assisted voting*. To address circumstances where repayment of overpaid advance public funding may cause serious financial hardship, which may arise where a participant is no longer eligible or has not elected to receive payment in relation to the next general election, the VEC will have discretionary powers to seek repayment in instalments or waive repayments.
- Administrative expenditure funding will provide funding in recognition of the administrative burden on elected members, whether they are a member of a political party or an independent. This will help elected Members of Parliament meet the administrative costs of running their offices and complying with disclosure and reporting requirements. Administrative expenditure funding must not be used for electoral expenditure, or paid into the State campaign account and used for political expenditure. Amounts payable will be based on the number of elected members from a registered political party, or a fixed amount of $300,000 for each independent elected member.
- Policy development funding will reimburse eligible political parties for costs incurred in relation to policy development, up to a maximum of $31,050.

Compliance and enforcement

The Bill will prescribe civil penalties and offences for non-compliance under the Act and empower the VEC to regulate compliance with the regime.

The VEC will be able to appoint compliance officers, who will have powers to gather information to investigate possible contraventions of the Act.

Strong penalties will act as a significant deterrence and signal the importance of compliance with reporting obligations, with penalties of up to two years imprisonment or fines of up to 300 penalty units.

To further ensure compliance with the regime and ensure bad-faith actors do not go searching for loopholes, intention to circumvent a prohibition or requirement under the regime will be an offence with penalties of up to 10 years imprisonment or 1,200 penalty units for a natural person, and 6,000 penalty units for a body corporate.

The Bill imposes prospective criminal liability for certain offences relating to donations made and received between 15 April and the day the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Additionally, the Bill will require registered political parties to refund to their former nominated entities, before the 28 November 2026, being the date of the next general election, any funds received from their nominated entities between 1 July 2023 and 14 April 2026 that are in excess of the new general cap and remain in the RPP's State campaign account on the day after the Bill receives the Royal Assent. The Bill will impose prospective criminal liability on those who fail to comply.

Independent Expert Panel Review

In addition to compliance and enforcement measures, the Bill requires an independent review to commence within 1 month following the 2026 November election to evaluate the operation and effectiveness of the new regime. The review will be conducted by an expert panel of three appointed members and will be completed within 12 months after the election. The appointment of an independent expert panel to undertake the review provides external oversight to ensure an objective assessment of the proposed reforms and that they are operating as intended.

The review will examine and make recommendations in relation to the operation of the regime, including:

- the effectiveness of the Act in addressing risks of undue influence arising from political donations;
- the effectiveness of the Act in promoting fairness in electoral competition;
- the operation and effectiveness of the political donation disclosure scheme, including timeliness, accessibility, and transparency;
- the impact of the Act on third-party campaigners, small community groups, and not-for-profit entities; and

- the overall administrative operation of the Act, including enforceability, compliance burden and the role of the VEC.

The report of the review will be laid before both Houses of Parliament within 10 sitting days after the review is completed.

Commencement

Following the decision in *Hopper* on 15 April 2026, when old Part 12 was declared invalid, there has been a period without a political donations and reporting framework. To rectify transparency concerns and ensure there is no gap where unlawful donations could unknowingly be made and received, the new political donations disclosure and reporting and state funding regime in Part 12 will commence retrospectively from 15 April 2026, the day of the *Hopper* judgement.

Public statements were released on 15 April and 17 April to put electoral participants on notice that obligations would apply retrospectively, to ensure continuous record keeping for disclosure and reporting purposes.

However, to ensure the Bill does not introduce retrospective criminal laws, certain offence provisions relating to making or accepting a political donation that is unlawful, entering into, or carrying out, a scheme with the intention of circumvention the proposed regime and failing to disclose and/or return certain nominated entity transfers, will be prospective offences and apply from Royal Assent.

Otherwise:

- Technical amendments to the Act will commence on 25 May 2026
- Remaining provisions, including consequential amendments to the *Electoral Amendment Act 2026* and the *Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster) Act 2026*, will commence on the day after the day on which the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Transitional and savings provisions

Also as a consequence of *Hopper*, the Bill will introduce transitional and savings provisions to validate past actions taken under old Part 12, so that they deemed to have been taken under new Part 12, including:

- funds paid by the VEC, and the acquittal of funding used by funding recipients
- activities related to the status of calendar year and financial year annual return
- deeming registers, compliance officer appointments and procedures of the VEC
- state campaign account activities.

Transitional provisions also provide for the separate interim cap of $5,030 for the period between 15 April 2026 and the date of the 2026 general election and provide that certain political donations offences do commence until after Royal Assent.

The Bill will also include a provision authorising the Governor in Council to make regulations containing provisions of a transitional nature, including matters of an application or savings nature, arising as a result of the Bill.

Conclusion

The Bill will ensure there is transparency and accountability in the electoral process, with political donations disclosure and reporting and state funding regime that is founded firmly on integrity-based principles.

The Electoral Act is fundamental to the operation of democracy in Victoria. Noting its significance, there will be a post-election review of the regime.

I commend the Bill to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:53): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:53): I move:

That debate be adjourned until later this day.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:53): How can it possibly be that this government would be in such a rush to rig the donations system that they would want to slam a donation bill through this chamber so immediately, presumably without any real debate? We know why. Because there are such

serious constitutional flaws with it, why would they want it debated? The government will say to you that there are no constitutional problems. What I would say, respectfully, is they got it wrong last time. All you can do is look at what occurred when they tried to pass bills through on the electoral donations system in 2018. The High Court struck them down. We have said since they struck them down that we want to see a robust set of laws that starts from the principle of being constitutionally valid. The government said it did not want to talk about any matters in this bill that relate to the constitutional matters. We said they got it wrong last time and we have no faith that they will not get it wrong again. You certainly cannot start from a viewpoint of dealing with a bill that has significant constitutional problems if you will not discuss the constitutional issues in it.

When we see the government today attempting to ram through a bill – second read it this morning, debate it this afternoon – all we can say is that this government are ramming through a rigged bill because they are in fear of losing an election and want to try and entrench their advantage. I suspect the High Court will have a further say. I do hope that not just members from our side of the chamber but other members are persuaded by my argument that a bill of this magnitude needs to be considered properly. If there are constitutional problems with it, those issues need to be dealt with.

What this bill does, by definition, is further entrench advantage to the Labor Party, which is at the heart of why the High Court threw out the previous laws. It entrenches their advantage further. How, you might ask? In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, what is Labor proposing to do? Increase public funding. If you felt that 67 new or increased taxes and charges were not enough under the life of this government, the Premier has put her hand out even further into your pocket – from all of us – to take out money and give it to the Labor Party. How grubby that you are creating a set of electoral laws which is based around the Premier putting her hand into your pocket and giving it to the Labor Party. That is the circular economy under this government. That is why we need proper debate on this bill. The idea that it gets dealt with in a couple of hours just goes to show the behaviour of this government and the nature of trying to ram through a rigged bill. It is appalling. When the government stand up and say, 'We don't need to debate it. We're all okay,' all I would say is they got it wrong last time – at the taxpayers expense, by the way. They footed the bill of the High Court challenge. They got it wrong, and I suspect they are going to get it wrong again with this bill. Time will tell. This time we will not have to wait years; I suspect we are only going to be waiting a matter of months. Unfortunately, just before an election I suspect we might see these laws fall over, and we will see a two-time loser of a government rushing through bills which are only about rigging Labor's advantage. It is wrong. It is morally wrong. It is outrageous. We will not stand for it. We certainly are calling it out now and will not support that today.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (10:59): I am pleased to rise to speak on this matter. It was very rude, I thought, for the member for Brighton to talk about two-time losers. That is a very unfair thing to say to the member for Bulleen as a two-time loser. It is a shame you brought that up initially.

The member for Brighton is concerned about constitutional validity. It is not something that was raised in the debate when these laws were put through some years ago. We were all quite shocked by the decision of the High Court, including the Liberal–National parties, who supported these bills in previous parliaments, so we need to turn back to this chamber and respond to those decisions of the High Court. It is a very normal thing for a government to do if a law is struck down by the High Court, whatever the reason may be. Of course it is important that these bills get debated in this chamber and that they get debated immediately, and that is because there are some real concerns around what the Liberal Party and other parties have been up to in terms of the amount of money that they have been putting into their accounts. Their animation around this is less about the bill in front of us and the bills to be debated potentially later today and more about what the Cormack Foundation has been doing with millions of dollars being piled into Liberal Party campaigns in places like Nepean. Nepean is a challenge for the Liberal Party, because they might also be thinking about some of those foreign donations that they may well have received.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am going to bring the member back to the procedural debate on the question of the adjournment of this matter.

Mathew HILAKARI: Of course. Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I am always pleased to be brought back to that at hand. The member for Brighton spoke about entrenched advantage, and that entrenched advantage exists when you throw millions of dollars into your campaign accounts as soon as humanly possible when the High Court rules some of our legislation out of order. Of course this is a worry for the Liberal Party, and that is why they have got deep concerns about having any debate on the bill in front of us.

I do take us to a matter that was raised in the *Australian*. It is not often that I quote the *Australian*. In Victoria Ink on 12 March 2026 there was a story titled 'Sir Philip Davis'. It was substantially about Bev McArthur from the other place and Trent Sullivan and the internal machinations of the Liberal Party, but there was a line that I do not think many of us picked up at the time.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member for Point Cook has strayed very far from this procedural debate. He has done it before, and I ask you to bring him back again.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I counsel all members to keep in mind that the procedural debate is about the timeliness of the adjournment, and whilst you can rebut things that have been said by –

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Come back to the procedural debate.

Mathew HILAKARI: Thank you for your counsel, Deputy Speaker. In rebutting the member for Brighton, I would like to mention that Mr Patel, a candidate for the Liberal Party, indicated he was 'willing to spend $200,000 to $250,000 the way you would like'. What does that say about the financial disclosure that is required and why this bill is so urgent? There is a potential candidate for the Liberal Party wanting to put up to a quarter of million dollars to be spent however you like into the donation coffers of the Liberal Party. There is an urgency for us to debate this and there is an urgent need for the Liberal Party not to debate this so that they can continue to rake those dollars into their account. We are calling for this debate to happen and happen quickly because there is an urgency. We wait again for the Cormack Foundation. I am sure they are listening, the trustees of this, right now and thinking about how they can get the money through the door. We are saying that money should not go through the door. We should know about the donations to the Liberal–National parties. We should know about the donations that they have received from overseas and anonymous donors. Of course we should. That is why it is urgent to get it through this Parliament. That is why it is urgent to go through this Parliament this week. The bill that we hope to debate and hope to debate quickly and get on with in this Parliament, which is a result of the High Court's decision, is something that we need to get to straightaway and we need to deal with this week, not wait till subsequent weeks so that more dollars and more anonymous foreign donations can be piled into Liberal campaign accounts. That is the critical matter – weeks and weeks of millions of dollars and candidates offering a quarter of a million dollars for their preselection.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (11:04): I also rise on this procedural debate. The government has moved that this bill should be debated later this day. What we want is for this bill to be debated in full and for more time to be allocated before this debate. But fundamentally we have got issues with this bill. We have got issues with the intent of the bill. Government members are talking about big money. I am very happy to speak about big money. It was a topic that they introduced, and the big money that I am referring to is the $1.5 million received by the Australian Labor Party's Victorian branch leading up to the 2022 Victorian election and the $400,000 since the Victorian election in 2022 that was received by the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party from none other than the CFMEU. That is why this government do not want a royal commission into the corruption on their Big Build projects, because they know that every single one of their members who were elected at the

2022 Victorian election would be implicated in an absolute and utter scandal because they were in receipt of $1.5 million in the lead-up to the Victorian election in 2022, donated to them by the CFMEU.

Nathan Lambert: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, as we are all well aware, this is a procedural debate, and the member has strayed far from that procedural debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): I will counsel members again that this is a procedural debate. It is quite narrow. It is about the timing of this bill. Could we all please stay within those parameters.

Brad ROWSWELL: This is the government's attempt to shamefully rig the system in their favour. They are not interested in transparency. They are not interested in enabling active and full participation in our democratic process. They are interested in rigging the system, and our contention is that this bill in fact enables them to do that. It was members of this government who raised big money coming into the system – big political donations coming into the system. Of course there should be transparency around all of this – of course there must. Foreign donations must be absolutely and utterly banned in terms of political donations in this state. That is the right thing to do. But this bill enables the continuation of union donations to the Australian Labor Party – from their union mates to the coffers of the Australian Labor Party – to continue the corruption that has occurred on their watch in this state. It is an absolute and utter disgrace.

We should be very, very, very clear about this. The Australian Labor Party, the government of Victoria, will claim time and time again that this bill is about transparency and that this bill is about being open about donations in this state. The Victorian people – those hardworking taxpayers and hardworking families who are already under cost-of-living pressures as it stands – should know that this bill is a shameful attempt by this government to rig the system to continue the Australian Labor Party receiving union donations. There was $1.5 million from the CFMEU alone in the lead-up to the 2022 election and $400,000 from the CFMEU to the Australian Labor Party since the last election, and this bill also enables greater public funding to political candidates and political parties. We are already $200 billion in debt. This government has already introduced or increased 67 taxes.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Order! Member for Sandringham, please keep to the timing part and stay within the parameters of the procedural debate.

Brad ROWSWELL: Indeed, Acting Speaker. We do not believe that this bill should be debated in the timeframe proposed, and the reason we do not believe that is the case is because of the contents of the bill. The bill enables these donations to take place. The government will claim transparency, but the truth is something quite different. In a cost-of-living crisis taxpayers money should be spent on essential services – more teachers, more nurses, a safer community – and not go into the coffers of political candidates and political parties, and for that reason it is a disgrace.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (11:09): It was rough to sit through the verbal diarrhoea of the member for Sandringham. Everyone in this chamber is now dumber for what they had to listen to.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Let us keep our contributions parliamentary, please.

Dylan WIGHT: Indeed. I am pretty sure everybody in this chamber has by now clued onto the fact that there was a very surprising High Court decision some weeks ago. It was surprising to most people, I think. Since that decision there have been no effective donation laws here in the state of Victoria, and that is a dangerous place to be.

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Order! There is too much audible noise in here and interjections coming from within the chamber. I would like to hear the member on their feet, and

I will just anticipate and caution the speaker and the speakers to come to remain within the narrow parameters of this procedural motion.

Dylan WIGHT: Indeed, Acting Speaker. If I could stop being interjected on, I was merely beginning a preamble as to why these laws are so urgent and why they should be debated today. We have right now in Victoria effectively no donation laws, which allows for several problematic things to occur, including donations into Victoria from foreign entities, which I think we can all agree is a dangerous place for the state's political and donation system to be. After weeks and weeks and weeks of consultation, both with the opposition and indeed with minor parties and crossbench members, we have come to a place where we as the government think that we can introduce legislation which will be transparent, be retrospective and go to some of the issues that we have spoken about. For the reasons that I just outlined, it is incredibly urgent to do so. It is incredibly urgent to get these laws into the Parliament and to get them passed as quickly as possible so we can make sure that our donation system is transparent.

To the procedural motion and the opposition's position on it, their position is not grounded in the fact that there needs to be more debate. Their position is not grounded in the fact that it is not transparent to pass this legislation or that there has not been enough consultation with the community. Their position on this procedural debate is nothing more than the fact that they do not support the legislation. We have as the government consulted with the Liberal Party to no end over the past weeks to try and land a position on this legislation. They were tricky negotiations, principally –

James Newbury: Acting Speaker, this has nothing to do with the debate.

Dylan WIGHT: I am talking about your position on the procedural motion and our position on the procedural motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Through the Chair, member for Tarneit.

Dylan WIGHT: Sorry, Acting Speaker. Principally, those negotiations were incredibly difficult because of the member for Brighton, who could not –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, you have guided the member to remain on the procedural debate. Sledging me is not relevant to this procedural motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): The member for Tarneit to resume and remain within the narrow parameters of this debate, which concerns timing.

Dylan WIGHT: Absolutely. Our position on this procedural motion and why this should be debated today is that it is urgent. The opposition's position on this procedural motion and why it should not be debated today is that they do not support the legislation. They cannot negotiate as one unit. The party office, the leader's office and the member for Brighton all have different positions.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Order! Member for Tarneit, we need to keep within the narrow parameters.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I believe this is the third or fourth time you have sought within 5 minutes to try and guide the member –

Members interjecting.

James Newbury: Can I finish my point of order, Acting Speaker?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): You certainly can, member for Brighton.

James Newbury: You have tried to assist the member in trying to deliver a 5-minute speech – and this, my friend, is how you do it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): The member's time has expired.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (11:14): I do not know that there was anything that resembled a coherent thought in that last contribution, but I will, out of respect for your position, Acting Speaker, and understanding that this is a procedural motion, do my very best to stay high and stay within those parameters. There are a few opinions that were just dished out then. Some of the facts are that introducing and first reading a bill yesterday and then second reading it today to be debated later this day simply does not adhere to the conventions of the Westminster system. It also simply does not allow time for any of my colleagues, who I know like to be actively involved in productive debate. This is a bill of over 110 pages –

Mathew Hilakari interjected.

Jade BENHAM: If we want to talk about One Nation, let us talk about that. Do we really want to open up that can of worms? I do not think so. We actually want donation laws that are constitutionally lawful and that level the playing field. I am sorry, I know that those on the other side have a different opinion to this. They want to make sure that the CFMEU can donate their million dollars to their election campaigns. I get that they want to rig elections; we all understand that. What we are after is a level playing field. That is all we are asking for. A bit of democracy – that is what we are all in this house for. I know those on the other side tend to giggle and laugh, and they get quite nasty. But that is why we are asking to stick to convention here rather than introduce this bill, which I agree is very important for a level playing field in this place and to ensure democracy in the state of Victoria – or the people's republic of Victoria, as it is becoming known as. It is very important; however, we have not had a chance for a bill briefing even. How is that in any way fair? It is absolutely disgusting.

Again, there are those of us, probably much like the member for Tarneit, that sit on the back bench, that have not in any way been involved in the negotiations regarding this bill and that actually want to sit down and read it in its entirety, contribute to a productive debate, understand what is in this bill and take part in a bill briefing. We are not going to have time to do that today, and we all know what is going to happen here, don't we? We know, because this happens time and time again when they want to ram through legislation that suits only the Labor Party. We will keep going on a bill that those of us on this side do not oppose, like the Outdoor Recreation Victoria Bill 2026 – we do not oppose that. I love talking about outdoor rec, and I have got the call next, so I would love to move on with that. But I know how this is going to go. We all know how this is going to go. We will spend the rest of today debating a bill we do not oppose. At 4 o'clock the minister at the table will move to adjourn that debate. We will come to this bill for 1 hour, and then it will be guillotined. That is exactly what is going to happen. That happens all the time. There is filibustering on a bill that we do not disagree with and do not oppose, and then there is an hour, so very few of us are able to participate in the debate, and then it is guillotined off. It silences and gags those of us and our communities on this side of the house. That is undemocratic. That is not why we are here.

Introducing a bill yesterday and having a first reading yesterday, a second reading today and a debate later this day hardly gives us the ability to consult or even read the bill. Some of us read quicker than others. Member for Narracan, I am not looking at anyone in particular, but –

Members interjecting.

Jade BENHAM: Hang on. Those on the other side get nasty; they direct all their nastiness towards us. At least I am highbrow enough to direct it to one of my mates, who I know will laugh about it anyway, so it is okay.

Wayne Farnham interjected.

Jade BENHAM: Here is another thing. The poor old member for Narracan says the bills do not have pictures, so it does take him a long time to read the bills – a few more diagrams, if you will – which is but another reason why we need bill briefings. To do this today does not allow for proper process, and we absolutely oppose it.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (11:19): *(By leave)* I begin by thanking the Leader of the House for the opportunity to talk a little bit about what is happening here. There has been a degree of froth in some of the debate we have just heard, but I just want to lay out what is happening. We have just literally in the last few minutes received a copy of this bill. That is a statement of fact. There is no dispute about that, I am sure.

I have been grateful to the Premier's office for the briefings we have received as this bill has been formulated, but we have significant concerns. The concerns I express as part of this procedural debate, of course, are the concerns about the timeframe. The question before this chamber is ultimately: is it reasonable for Parliament to debate a bill with all of this complexity, with all of this nuance and with an interface with the common law, an uncertain jurisdiction if ever there was one? With all of that going on, is it reasonable to introduce a bill at a quarter past 11 in the morning and then seek to have it debated and presumably guillotined today? I have not received any indication yet from the government whether that guillotine might drop today or tomorrow on it, but that is the question before the chamber. As I say, I am grateful to the Leader of the House for the opportunity. I am grateful to the Parliamentary Budget Office for having been briefed on the contents of this bill, but we have literally just got it minutes ago.

I will be the first to admit I probably have not read every bill that has gone through this joint.

Jade Benham interjected.

Will FOWLES: Yes, I know. Certainly, when you are in the government you rely very much on your ministers bringing things to the chamber that broadly ascribe to your value set. But this is one where we in the crossbench need to get into the detail, into the nitty-gritty of this bill, because there are some very, very serious issues at play. The way the High Court framed its decision in *Hopper v Victoria* was to remove an entire part from an act. That had consequences that, in my view and probably the view of many others – lay views, admittedly – went a fair bit beyond the matters being litigated. Nonetheless, that is the High Court's prerogative. I have heard a number of people in this chamber over the course of the last couple of days profess to hold views about whether acts are constitutional or not. With the greatest of respect to the Shadow Attorney, newly minted lawyer that he is, he is not a seasoned constitutional lawyer of 40 years standing as in fact most of the members of the High Court are and, frankly, I will defer to them on these matters. But equally, the government will be getting very serious constitutional law advice from very serious constitutional lawyers, and at a minimum, they ought to share that advice with the chamber. That advice should be shared with all of us, because these matters have such a substantial degree of complexity.

On the procedural issue, what I say is, if we are to get our heads around difficult, nuanced, complicated constitutional legal advice and if we are to get our heads around difficult, nuanced, complicated prospective legislation, we just need more time. It has been some six or seven weeks since the decision landed. I know that there has been lots of the typical brouhaha going on, particularly when you involve the organisational wings of major political parties, who are pretty good at throwing rocks and not necessarily minded to sensible negotiation or conciliation when they all get in a room, and you have obviously got the chasm between the organisational wing of the Liberal Party and its parliamentary representatives. But with all of that going on, with all of the difficulties of landing a position, the government should nonetheless afford this chamber the respect and the decency, frankly, to be able to properly consider all of these matters. That proper consideration would be achieved by adjourning this off, notwithstanding the urgency. That is felt most particularly by the crossbench, because quite literally staff will be retrenched if this replacement part does not end up on the statute book pretty bloody soon. Staff will actually be turfed out onto the street; that is the reality. So I agree with the urgency, but nonetheless there are some serious complexities here, and I would strongly encourage the government to give us all just a bit more time to wrap our collective heads around that complexity. But again, I thank the Leader of the House for his indulgence.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, and consistent with the last line of the member for Ringwood just then about a bit more time, I note in what has just been tabled the statement of treaty compatibility states at point 5 – and I am asking you, Acting Speaker, perhaps to refer this to the Speaker:

> The First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl … was not given an opportunity to advise on the Bill …

We have been told repeatedly in this chamber how important it is to consult on every piece of legislation, and in fact it is the treaty legislation put forward by this government that requires this, and yet they have breached it at the first available opportunity.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): What is the point of order?

Danny O'Brien: I am asking you to ask the Speaker whether it is appropriate for this legislation to go forward in this situation.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): That is a point of debate, not a point of order.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would ask you, and I take the Leader of the National Party's point: is the statement of treaty compatibility that has been tabled in this house compliant in the view of the Speaker?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): I will refer the question to the Speaker.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (48): Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Nick Staikos, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

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

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until later this day.

Business of the house

Program

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (11:32): I move:

> That the government business program resolution agreed to by this house on 2 June 2026 be amended to change the completion time of the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026 to 7 pm on 3 June 2026.

It is our government that believes elections should be fair and that they should be decided by Victorians. Liberals believe big business should decide elections, and that big business, with big dollars in their back pocket –

Members interjecting.

Anthony CARBINES: Isn't it interesting that we have before us the opportunity, in amending the business program, to debate and discuss a bill that will replace the invalid regime in part 12 of the Electoral Act 2002 to increase transparency and integrity in the Victorian electoral system, but those opposite would rather a free-for-all? Those opposite do not want electoral funding transparency or integrity. Just like the old COVID record, they want to let it rip. That is what those opposite want to do. They do not want follow-the-money powers around the dark money of foreign investment and foreign donations. Those opposite do not want accountability – back to the High Court decision in April to hold them accountable – for whatever funding donations were made in Nepean or those that might come later through to this election. We know that electoral funding needs to be transparent. It needs to have integrity. We need to be sure that everyone who makes donations around elections, and that funding, is transparent and clear so that we can have full understanding of the way in which people choose to engage with and influence the result of elections.

We want fair elections, and we want Victorians to decide those elections – not big business, not big money and not those who want to remain anonymous and hide in the shadows. It is only those opposite that want to obfuscate, delay, deflect and not bring on the debate on these electoral funding matters to bring forward integrity, balance and transparency around electoral funding. Those opposite do not want to debate it, do not want to vote on it and do not want to discuss it. They would rather have no rules at all.

Since the High Court struck matters down in April, the Parliament needs to act. The Parliament needs to make decisions. We have a bill before the Parliament that will restore balance, transparency and integrity in electoral funding and hold accountable those who seek to influence those who want to be elected to this place. The people who cannot quite come to a decision about whether they want to support transparency and integrity in electoral funding include the Leader of the Opposition. And who is the Leader of the Opposition? Is it the member for Kew? Is it the member for Brighton? The confusion around what they choose to discuss –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, it is a procedural motion – relevance.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): The minister to remain within the parameters of the debate before the chamber.

Anthony CARBINES: There is clearly touchiness from those opposite, who have spent most of their time obfuscating, deflecting and denying that there is an electoral funding transparency issue that needs to be addressed since the High Court made its determinations back in April. The Parliament, through a series of negotiations with other parties, independents and those opposite over six weeks, have brought a bill before this place that the government seeks to act on immediately, seeks to act on later this day, seeks to determine today and hold to account each and every member in this place. The electoral funding needs to be transparent and accountable. We want elections decided by Victorians, not by dark money, not by those who want to hide in the shadows. The only people – and we will see this through this government business program amendment – who do not support bringing on this bill later this day and bringing it to a determination and conclusion so the remainder of the Parliament can deal with it are those opposite.

And what are their motivations for that? They are quite happy that the High Court has struck down electoral funding laws in this state. They are quite happy to let it rip. They are quite happy to make sure that it is a free-for-all. That is what they are like over there – a bit dog eat dog, find your own dog, do what you like, have no democracy, spend what you like in the back corner and in the back pocket. That is what those opposite are looking forward to doing. They will play the role of making sure there are not electoral funding laws in this state. They do not want any laws. They cannot find a coherent narrative or position on these matters. The government has a bill before this place and amendments to the business program that will ensure electoral funding is transparent – that there is accountability and integrity in our funding laws for elections and donations in this state – while those opposite will

continue to obfuscate, to delay and deflect and deny, because hiding in the shadows and taking money from dark operators and big business is their game plan.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (11:37): What the government are trying to do today is ram through their rigged laws, and you can see that is all it is. They know these laws do not stack up, but they also know that the beneficiary is Labor. Labor is the beneficiary of these laws – and I get why they are doing it. They are wrong, but I get why they are doing it. Do you know why? Because they are sinking. This government is end of days. I do not know which one of you briefed that out yesterday, but with 'end of days' you were bang on. You can see these dodgy, rigged laws. I welcome the Premier into the chamber. I am glad the Premier is here and I can say it directly: these laws will not stand up, Premier. It is shameful. This ramming through of these laws is shameful. And we just asked, led by the Leader of the Nationals, a very simple question: are these laws so rushed that they may not even stack up in their ability to be debated?

If you turn to the statement of treaty compatibility, the First Peoples' Assembly were not even consulted. The moral superiority of Labor on treaty – it drips from them.

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Order! I am on my feet. There is too much audible noise. I can barely hear, which is extraordinary. Everyone else just needs to be quieter, please.

James NEWBURY: I say again: this government has breached treaty with these proposed laws. Can you believe they have breached treaty? The moral superiority that comes from that side of the chamber over treaty and for introducing treaty compatibility into their proposed legislation – they could not have been more chuffed. It dripped off them. And to see them being forced to admit – which is why we have asked the Speaker whether the statement associated with these proposed laws even stacks up. I am looking forward to the Speaker reporting back to the house on whether the statement of treaty compatibility is even a legitimate statement, because it is a legislative requirement that they provide it. As they say in this statement:

> The First Peoples' Assembly … was not given an opportunity to advise on the Bill …

Where is your moral superiority now, Labor? Very, very quiet.

This bill rigs the system for Labor. We have said consistently, despite the Leader of the House's meaningless attempts, that we support a strong system, we support a transparent system, we support bans on foreign money. But what we also support as a point of principle is constitutionally valid laws. When it comes to these proposed laws, the government said at the get-go, 'We will negotiate with you, but we will not negotiate on any part of the proposed laws that deal with the constitutionality.' We said, 'Well, guys, you got it wrong. The High Court said you got it wrong, so we need to consider a set of laws that are constitutional,' and the government said, 'No'. What they wanted to talk about was only a small fraction of the proposed laws. We took the view, and I certainly took the view very early on, that it was a sham and this government had no interest in making these laws constitutional. What were they focused on when I was talking about things like caps with the government? Direct quote: 'The West Party matter's success and not having high caps so that the West Party would not be a threat.' That was what this government were focused on – not the constitutionality of the bill but their electoral fortunes. This tips taxpayers money into Labor's coffers. It is an outrageous attempt today to ram this bill through. It will be seen by the broader community as such. I know it will. We will never support what Labor is seeking to do so disgracefully now.

John LISTER (Werribee) (11:42): To bring this back to the issue at hand, it is around a procedural motion changing our government business program to have this matter dealt with by 7 pm this evening and making sure that we have the chance here in this chamber to get this through urgently, because since 15 April 2026 there have been no regulations around where money can come from when it comes to our electoral system. It means money could be coming from all sorts of places – it could be coming from dark money; it could be coming from billionaires – and the longer we leave this, the more chances

there are for things to fall through. We want transparency in our electoral system, and that is definitely something that we need to debate urgently. We need to get this to the upper house. We need to have that discussion here first, obviously, but we also need to get it to the upper house for their consideration as well this week, because the longer we leave it, the more chance there is for people to be moving money in and around our electoral system without any kind of transparency around it. We need to bring this bill on – vitally.

While this is a procedural debate and we are looking at the idea of debating this today until 7 pm in this house, there are a few things that we need to address here. Having public funding electoral rules and having public money in elections is important, because it means that it keeps billionaires out from influencing our elections. We do not want the rotten boroughs of the Tories of yesteryear, which seem to be what those opposite want – the rotten boroughs. They want billionaires to be able to influence what MPs can do and who gets to speak.

James Newbury interjected.

Katie Hall: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I heard a comment from the member for Brighton which I found quite offensive. Could you ask him to withdraw it – relating to the member for Werribee.

John LISTER: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I did in fact hear what the member for Brighton referred to me as, and I wish for him to withdraw that particularly offensive statement.

James Newbury: I withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): The comment has been withdrawn.

John LISTER: Thank you. To make sure that there is a little bit of order in this place, I think it is important to remember that by having that public funding it means that we can have control over the types of influence that are in our politics. There are nefarious actors out there that do want to influence our politics here in the state of Victoria. We need to make sure that there is that opportunity for new entrants into the system as well to get that support, which is something that this procedural motion being accepted by the house will go to.

Not to foreshadow too much of what is in the bill, but I do want to return to why it is important to discuss this now and have this debate conclude at 7 pm tonight so that we have time to get this through the Parliament. We have all been discussing this since 15 April. I can assure you we have all been in those discussions. We all understand that the need is there. The particulars, the figures and the numbers need to be debated in this house, but at the same time those negotiations have been happening between the different parties and the different people who have an interest in this bill. What is important to maintain the integrity of our system is that we have this debate now, and we do it now. The longer we leave it, the more opportunities there are for people to get into our politics here in Victoria and influence them with money rather than with ideas. I know that is a little bit scary for those opposite, to have an election that is based on ideas and policy, given that they have come up with nothing for the western suburbs so far – I am just putting that out there. They have no policies for my part of town. They would rather have a debate based on how many corflutes they can buy –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Order! Member for Werribee, I caution you to stay within the parameters of the debate.

John LISTER: We know that they do not want to have a debate of ideas. Public funding is really important to make sure that there is that level playing field, so it is a debate on ideas and policies for the people of Victoria rather than just who has more money from mining interests and from interests that want to do things in our community that may not be the best for our community, and some nefarious actors that are not necessarily legally registered industrial organisations either. It is important to have this debate. I wish to have this debate today, and I commend the motion to the house.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (11:47): What a disgrace this is from this government. What a disgrace this is not just for the merits of what this legislation is about and a government that is desperately trying to cling to power and use any means at its disposal to do so, but a government that cannot manage its own affairs. We are here in this situation because the government messed up this legislation at the start. That is why we are here. We had Daniel Andrews back in 2018 bring this forward, and that is the genesis of the debacle that we now find with the donations reform. Then in terms of the management of the chamber and the business of the day, the Leader of the House has had the gall to say that the opposition has no coherent narrative. That from a bloke who yesterday moved a business program that had this piece of legislation finishing at 5 o'clock tomorrow, yet today has come in and said, 'Actually, no, we've messed that up too and we've got to change it, and now we're going to make it 5 o'clock today.' They have the cheek to say to us, 'Oh, you guys have no coherent narrative.' They could not organise a chook raffle in a pub these guys. It is extraordinary that the government does not know what it is doing at any given time.

I pick up the comments of the member for Werribee stating that we have all been engaged in this discussion. I am sure the member for Werribee is fully aware of the full 119 pages of this legislation. That is said with tongue in cheek, because I am sure he has not been informed, just as we on this side have only just got this legislation in full. I did see an earlier copy, but it was 116 pages, so clearly there have been some changes made again. The government is still working through what it actually wants to do, and we know that because extraordinarily, after all the lecturing that we have been getting from the government about treaty, at the first sign of a little bit of a problem, the government completely ignores its own treaty legislation. The statement of treaty compatibility tabled with this Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026 specifically states:

> Due to the recent establishment of the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl, it was not possible to give the First Peoples' Assembly the opportunity to advise on the Bill …

We are told by those opposite that this is urgent and we have got to rush it through. The explanation as to why the assembly was not given an opportunity is the Statewide Treaty Act 2025 commenced on 1 May and the assembly only became operational on Monday 4 May, and:

> Considering this timeframe, there was insufficient time to seek advice from the Assembly.

It is 3 June – it is a month later. It just shows that this government's supposed commitment to treaty and to consulting the Aboriginal people of this state is –

Kim Wells interjected.

Danny O'BRIEN: only when it suits them – exactly right, member for Rowville. It is only when it suits this government that they are committed to consulting with people. When it does not suit them, they just bulldoze their way through. And this is a government that does not even know how it wants to do the bulldozing. Yesterday the bulldozing was by 5 o'clock tomorrow. Today they have cut some dodgy deal with the crossbench in the upper house. They have cut a deal that says they will get exactly what they want as the Labor Party. The Labor Party will get what they want – the rivers of gold from the union movement, from the corrupt CFMEU, will continue to come through to the labour movement, but they will do over everybody else and remove the opportunity for others.

Then we have the member for Werribee having the gall to talk about nefarious actors. How much did the Lottery Corporation give to the Labor Party before the government did a dodgy deal on the eve of the budget, a billion-dollar deal for a 40-year extension of the Lottery Corporation's licence? If the member for Werribee wants to talk about nefarious activity, he only needs to look around his own benches, because this government has got questions to answer on things like that.

It is absolutely galling to have the government trying to lecture anyone else in this place about integrity, about probity and about corruption when it has overseen the worst corruption this country has seen – $15 billion of CFMEU corruption to bikies and criminals on the Big Build, most of it overseen by the Premier as the minister at the time, who is still not willing to own up to it. To have the government

say that this is now urgent for integrity's sake is hypocrisy of the highest order. The government stands condemned for its activity on this. It has failed with the legislation. It will fail again, and it deserves to be condemned.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (11:52): I might begin by reminding people of the Statewide Treaty Act 2025 that this this chamber considered and passed. It did not require mandatory consultation with Gellung Warl, and I would just suggest to the Leader of the Nationals and the member for Brighton that they may want to read more carefully the legislation that passes through this chamber. But perhaps all of us here know there is a good reason they may not have paid good attention to that particular bill, and that is because they do not support treaty.

I rise on this procedural matter to support the position taken by the Leader of the House and indeed the position set out by the member for Werribee. It is true that in this state we have a problem at the moment with the fact that there is no framework for political donations, and it is true that that raises very real concerns about what the Leader of the House called dark money and about, as the member for Tarneit in his earlier contribution referred to, significant donations from foreign entities. It is absolutely the case that there is an urgent requirement to fix that.

I listened carefully to the member for Brighton. The member for Brighton's chief reason for opposing these procedural motions is that, in his words, there are problems with the legislation. I would counsel the member not to anticipate what a future High Court decision might get to. But if the member thinks there are problems with the legislation, he should surely welcome the opportunity to debate them in a substantive debate. I have to say, Acting Speaker, in listening to the contributions that we have heard from the opposition today, you have had to caution them numerous times about not debating the substantive matters, and that strongly suggests to me that they, like us, would like to get to that substantive debate because they recognise, as we do, the urgency.

I would put, if I can, a particular reason for that urgency that strikes me, and it is one I think the opposition would agree with. Many of us out talking to people in our community at the moment have noticed the very significant rise in support for One Nation, and that is something that I think many of us have reasons to be concerned about. If we think about it, when we talk to those people there is no doubt that some of those voters are driven by what could only be described as quite bigoted and often very gendered positions. Sometimes it is driven by this sort of false nostalgia and nationalism, but often it is driven by concerns about integrity. These are conversations that all of us are having with voters at the moment. There is a sense amongst some of those One Nation voters that the system is rigged, that major parties are corrupt and that governments are corrupt.

Members interjecting.

Nathan LAMBERT: There are interjections from members of the Liberal Party. I suggest to them that perhaps this is a matter of urgency for them as well. Indeed for members of the National Party it is perhaps even more urgent that this One Nation vote is driven in part by this perception people have that the entire system is rigged against them. I would add that they extend that perception very much to the Liberal and National parties. They see the Liberal and National parties as part of the problem.

Anthony Carbines interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: Exactly. As the Leader of the House says, we saw that play out in Farrer. I think it is incumbent upon all of us to be able to go out and talk about the genuine integrity in our system. It is not true to say that in Victoria the government is acting against the people. It is not true to say that in Victoria elections are rigged. It is an important message for all of us in the conversations we are having throughout the rest of this year. I would suggest to the opposition parties and indeed to the Greens that I think every single party in this chamber at the moment has good reason to want to, as quickly as possible, be able to have conversations with some of those people, at least those who have concerns about integrity. And I will be very honest with you, when I have those conversations, I get the impression that what I am doing when I can convince some One Nation voters that the system

is not totally rigged against them is that I am actually just turning them back into voters for the Liberal Party. I am not sure I am even winning voters for myself, but I still, very honestly, do not mind doing that, because I think it is important for all of us that some of those voters who have this false perception of a system that is totally rigged against them should be brought back and away from joining forces with some other voters who have very bigoted positions. We would all like to see that One Nation vote go back down to single digits – to the core of people, I think, who have very discriminatory positions that none of us would ever support.

Part of that important work is having conversations about integrity, and part of getting to that is having to fix the exact problem the Leader of the House and the member for Werribee set out in their contributions. It is a serious problem. It is feeding into an inaccurate and dangerous perception in our society, and I absolutely think we need to move as quickly as possible, as the Leader of House says, to get into the substantive debate about this and, most importantly, to get a bill through this chamber, allowing our colleagues in the other place to debate it and get the bill passed, so that these significant problems that we have highlighted can be fixed and we can have a proper conversation about integrity in this state.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (11:57): Let me give the member for Preston 15 billion reasons why Victorians think the system is rigged – $15 billion of corruption. If you thought that was enough and people had had a gutful, well, they have. Victorians have had a gutful. This government are so desperate that again they are trying to rig an election by ensuring that money can be shovelled in from the union to ensure they get votes up come election time. This is nothing but a government so desperate they want to rig the system and take money from their union mates to ensure they get victory come November, and every single Victorian can see through this corrupt Labor government and a Premier that is so desperate that she is doorknocking her own seat because her vote has fallen through the floor.

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I have been pretty lenient, I think, but I have to get to my feet and say that the member for Caulfield is not being relevant to the motion on the government business program that has been moved.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): The member has strayed somewhat from the motion put before the house. I have cautioned other speakers to remain within the parameters, which is debating the time of guillotine.

David SOUTHWICK: Victorians know that this government is the worst, most corrupt government that we have seen, and this is another example of it. The donation laws were thrown out by the High Court not only because they did not pass the pub test but because they were not legal. They were thrown out because they were not legal. Now what this government want to do is have another crack, but instead of doing it properly they have literally overnight just delivered a bill of 119 pages into the Parliament to rush it through as quickly as they can in the hope that Victorians do not see through this mess, in the hope that Victorians do not see through what this government are actually trying to do in their corruption that continues. The one thing this government does well is corruption. That is the one thing that they do. This is why this government is trying to rush this bill through in the light of day as quickly as it possibly can – to ensure Victorians do not see through this corruption. But Victorians know just how corrupt this government is. They know it. $15 billion of CFMEU corruption, and then this donation law –

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, it is not a sledge motion. It is the government business program in relation to the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026, and the member is not anywhere near those matters.

David SOUTHWICK: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the minister would know that this particular motion that we are dealing with is all a timing issue, and it is dealing with the reasons why the government are trying to rush it through, and they are trying to do it as a protection racket for their CFMEU mates. That is what they are trying to do. The Minister for Police should know, because –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Member for Caulfield, what is the point of order? The rebuttal is that you are being relevant. Is that correct? Okay. I will rule on the point of order. It is very, very tenuous. We are trying to keep to the timing, and I have been listening carefully. I will say that timing has been discussed there, member for Caulfield, so please keep within the parameters of this procedural motion, the government business program, about the timing of this guillotine.

David SOUTHWICK: The truth hurts, and when the Minister for Police has to stand up here and try and run a protection racket on a piece of legislation that they are trying to rush through simply because they want to ensure that they get donation money from their CFMEU mates, this smells like a dirty racket – a dirty racket of corruption from the CFMEU, and Victorians know it. They will see through it come November. This government should not be allowed to rig an election by taking union money to ensure that it can steal an election come November. That is why rushing this through does not pass the pub test. We need to ensure it is given proper consideration, and trying to rush something through which the High Court has thrown out – the government wants to have another crack, and we know it does not stack up. We will be back at the High Court again because the government have not done their homework, and all they want to do is rig an election come November and take money from their CFMEU mates.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (12:02): *(By leave)* In a normal process we believe that all laws that are put before this place should go through the normal legislative process in terms of being introduced and then released and having two weeks so that there is public scrutiny on laws and that parties can have a look at them and hear feedback from stakeholders and constituents and then have them debated and passed through this house, or not passed through this house. In this case we will be supporting the procedural motion to vote on these laws tonight, because we have a situation right now where we have no donation laws at all in Victoria, and that is a very scary situation. We have had several months now where dark money – it could be overseas money, big money, hundreds of thousands of dollars if not millions of dollars – is flowing to political parties and candidates here in Victoria from billionaires, from corporations, from vested interests and from people who want to buy the election in Victoria and influence the outcome of the election. There are no caps on that, and that is a completely untenable situation to be in and a scary situation. I think all Victorians would be pretty horrified to know that that is happening right now. We need to put a stop to that and we need to do it quickly. So these laws, as we see them, are a temporary fix to plug that hole, which is why we think that it is important that they are voted on tonight. That is why we will be supporting the procedural motion.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (51): Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Nick Staikos, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills

Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026

Appropriation

The SPEAKER (12:09): I have received a message from the Governor recommending an appropriation for the purposes of the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026.

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:10): I rise to speak on the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026. I start by saying that this bill comes from a desperate government in its final days in an attempt to rig the system. We are here because the Labor government introduced a set of dodgy laws that the High Court threw out. That is why we are here. The government, under the former Premier Daniel Andrews, the king of dodginess, introduced a set of laws when he was Premier that the High Court threw out as unconstitutional, and it threw them out in a far broader way than anyone had anticipated. The High Court said these laws simply entrenched incumbency in a way that was unconstitutional. When the High Court delivered its judgement, we took the view and said publicly how strongly we believed as a coalition that we would have laws in place that protected a robust system, a democratic system, an electoral system that allowed donations but ones that were guided by a number of principles. We wanted to ensure transparency in the system, we wanted to support a ban on overseas donations, and we wanted to support retrospectivity in the system. Of course we did. In fact on the day of the announcement I asked the Premier's office to announce retrospectivity, because of course you cannot have a system in place that does not have those principles in place.

Instead, we have a bill that has just been introduced with a forced debate now that rigs the system for a government that is in its last days. How does it do that? It suffocates all money going to opposing candidates and entrenches incumbency in a dramatic way and, frankly, in a shameful way. I suspect these laws will be considered by the High Court again. If you read media reports of what others are saying about these proposed laws, they are already flagging constitutional concerns – and those concerns are real. If you read the judgement of the High Court when it threw out the previous laws, it made it clear that there were substantial parts it felt were unconstitutional. It could not simply fix them, is what the High Court said, in short. It said it could not simply pull out certain parts and fix them, so the entire swathe of part 12 was removed and found to be unconstitutional. It was found to be unconstitutional for a very good reason, which is why we have said we are concerned about a number of principles that underpin this bill, and we confirmed our concerns immediately.

As I said, we let the government know how strongly we felt about supporting particular elements – retrospectivity, bans on foreign donations, these types of matters – which we of course discussed as points of important principle. But what the government is proposing to do with this bill is block all big money from the system, except from the unions. How can it be that this government is proposing a set of laws that bans all big money, except from the unions? These laws are not just rigged; they are shonky, they are dodgy. There is no other way that you can look at them. How can anybody possibly vote for laws that simply allow Labor to have funnelled to them millions of dollars? I say to the crossbench: I agree we need laws in place, I agree that it is urgent to do so, I agree that we need transparent laws in place as soon as possible, but how could you possibly vote for a set of laws that simply game the system? What I think it shows me is that this government are so desperate and so concerned about their standing that they are willing to throw out any moral clarity in the laws they are proposing.

You can see it only today when the laws were introduced in the statement of compatibility that is attached to the proposed laws. Only a few weeks ago the government put in place a law that requires

each new bill to include a statement of treaty compatibility. When it was attached to this bill it made clear that the First Peoples' Assembly was not given the opportunity to advise on the bill. This bill is so rushed the government breached its own treaty obligations. It shows the lack of morality this government is showing on this bill.

No matter what Labor say, and they are saying a lot, we will not have it said that we have not supported basic underlying principles, and we have been very clear on that. But what we have also said is there has to be a constitutional validity to what is being proposed, because as the Premier has stated publicly, these laws will be challenged. The Premier said that. The Premier said these laws will be challenged. I suspect the challenge will be heard quickly. As has been discussed publicly, the challenge will occur quickly, because we are talking about a set of laws replacing a set of subject matter that the High Court threw out. So I do believe that the speed with which they hear it will be quicker, and the Premier has also spoken to that. She has spoken to her view that a challenge will be heard before the election.

So how important is it to get right? Well, on the timeline the Premier has set out this Parliament will have been prorogued by the time that this matter is heard, so there will be no opportunity for the Parliament to come back and close any loophole. So the importance of getting this right is absolutely critical, which is why we said from the get-go we have to make sure that what is being proposed will stand up to a further challenge. What did the government say? 'We will not negotiate on any of the constitutional matters contained in the bill. We won't negotiate on it.' And they have not. They have not at any point negotiated on the matters that relate to the constitutionality.

My view has been for some time that the negotiation process on this bill was in fact a sham. At no time really did I believe that the Premier genuinely wanted to work with the other side of the chamber on laws that could work. From almost the get-go I did not believe the Premier. I am not saying that the Premier sending out her 15th-order adviser to deal with the negotiations on this bill was an indication of that. I am not saying that the fact that her minister – well, she did not have one at the time. Even now, I do not think anyone has had any consultation with the minister. The minister is just getting paid for the job; they are certainly not doing anything for it. No, that is wrong. The minister stood behind the Premier at the press conference and nodded the other day, so she is doing something. But at no point has she had anything to do with this bill, that I am aware of.

The Premier sent out her 15th-order adviser to negotiate on this bill, which led me to believe from the get-go that the Premier had no real interest in proper negotiation on this bill. I believe that the Premier wanted to do a deal with the crossbench immediately, because I believe that they knew that the crossbench would do a deal based on certain particulars of the legislation rather than the robustness or whether it was constitutional, and that appears to be the case. I look forward to hearing the crossbench contributions as to whether or not they feel the legality of the bill will stack up, because there is no point dealing with the particulars of a bill if you feel the legal validity of it is shaky, especially when there is a real threat, as the Premier has said herself, of a challenge on the legislation imminently in the lead-up to the election. I do not think any good Victorian wants to see laws thrown out in the weeks before an election. I do not think any Victorian wants to see that, which is why it was so important that this draft legislation be right before it came to this place, and sadly, what this draft legislation is is wrong. It is also rigging of the system by Labor – I will talk about it in more detail – on things like donation caps. There were conversations about donation caps, including as recently as last night. The government came to us and offered $20,000 donation caps last night, and we agreed.

On every occasion that we have talked about caps throughout the process – what the cap should be – I have made the point that if you have too low caps, then I am concerned about the constitutional validity of the fact the government is proposing higher public funding, because if you are entrenching advantage through higher public funding, then you certainly cannot disadvantage new entrants. By keeping very low caps, I am concerned that – well, in fact I do not think it is a point for debate; I think it is actually just fact – the public funding eclipses what the donation cap is. But on donation caps in those consultations, what did the government say back? Did they say to me, 'Well, James, let's discuss the constitutional merit of the argument. Let's talk through the merit of whether or not the cap level's

right versus the public funding'? Do you know what they said? 'But we're worried about west matters.' That is what they said to me: 'We're worried about west matters in our seats.' And I get it. I get that Labor's entire strategy is to suffocate money out of opponents. I think that becomes very clear.

I think the principal failure in this bill is the government's cravenness to increase public funding in a cost-of-living crisis and keep caps low in a way that I think will be the core of why this proposed set of laws will fall over. There are a number of issues with it, but centrally I believe that mix between low caps and high increases in public funding will be the core of the constitutional challenge, because I think it is the biggest concern.

But what did Labor do when we discussed the issue? They said, 'But we want more public funding. We said, 'Well, are you proposing public funding increases on the per vote public funding or the administration funding?' For the house's background, there are two forms of public funding – one for each primary vote and one for each party. The government said, 'No, no, no, we don't want to increase the per vote funding, because that might assist the parties who are not elected but are receiving strong support in the community. We only want to increase public administration funding, because we are here. We are here, and that won't cause issues in relation to the challenges that will be mounted' – in the government's words – 'from the west.' But when they design a system that is based on squeezing out their opponents and they design a system that puts Labor's hand further into your pocket so they can take more money out, it is doomed to fail.

That is what we will see with these proposed laws, I suspect, because the problems that the High Court identified with the first set of laws, which underpinned the reason they threw them out, are now worse. Objectively, when you look at what is being put forward, it is hard not to see them as being worse. They are worse. The problems are worse because the hurdles with things like, as I just spoke to, the differential between low donation caps and public funding have actually got greater. I suspect that if this is challenged, the core of what the challenge may look to is that difference, because new entrants can now raise very little and the Labor Party is taking more money – not because they went to an election and elected more members of Parliament or saw more people vote for them by way of primary vote. No. What this bill does is simply say, 'We are going to significantly increase the public admin funding through this bill.' When I say increase it, for the first member under the previous laws it was $200,000. What is being proposed is $300,000 – a 50 per cent increase. If you are an independent member raising that difference with these caps, it is an enormous challenge. In fact you could argue that differential is so great that it is not possible. When the increase on the donation cap has been so small, it is hard not to see that being at the core of the issue.

We have heard through the debate on these matters that by raising our concerns about the legal validity somehow we are not concerned about the fact that there are no laws. I would start by saying these proposed laws are retrospective. So whatever has happened since the High Court struck it down, if it was in breach of the new laws, it will be accounted for, and it will be accounted for speedily. There is no question about that. I do not think there has been any public debate in opposition to that. I do not think anybody is saying, 'Let's keep the overseas money dark so that it can't be banned.' I do not think anyone has mounted that argument. I do not think anybody has said that donations should not be declared. I do not think anybody said that. Of course there have been conversations about where the donation cap should kick in and what the declaration figure should be in terms of what is disclosed. I think those things have been discussed, but they have been discussed by the government. To think that the bill today is the final position of the government and has been the final position of the government for some weeks is just factually wrong.

As I said earlier, there have been ongoing conversations between not just the coalition but I am sure other members of this place and the other place as to what those numbers are. I do not think that is unreasonable. I think having a conversation about those things is actually a good thing, not a bad thing. At no point have we stopped attempting in good faith to negotiate. But what struck me on all of these matters was that the government did not appear in any way interested in a set of negotiations that went to the concerns we had as to why the High Court struck down the laws and what we see as problems

with this proposal in moving forward into this bill form. The only answer to why the government have not considered changing what they had proposed regarding those matters, the only possible conclusion that you could draw, is the raw, rank politics of wanting to rig the system, because from the moment the increases in public funding were raised the first thing I know I said was, 'We are in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis.' It was the very first thing I said. How could a major party want to put their hand further into the pockets of Victorians and take more money? How could they want to do that? But that is what these proposed laws do.

On top of that, of course when we raised our concerns about big money being banned except for the unions, you can imagine how much interest there was in that conversation. You can just imagine it, can't you? You can just imagine the conversation happening: 'But, Labor, under your proposed laws only the unions can tip millions of dollars into your pocket – only the unions. All other money is banned. How is that a fair and reasonable set of laws?' And the government's response was very, very short, I can assure you. The idea that they accidentally tripped into that outcome is laughable. It is by design. These laws rig the system, and unfortunately I cannot see the other place fully thinking through the outcome of supporting these laws. I suspect unfortunately that the government will have worked with the crossbench on these laws and that they will support them. I know of one group of members who in their negotiations with the government said, 'All we want is more public funding.' There was no meaningful point of negotiation other than increasing public funding. That is the kind of horsetrading that unfortunately has happened here. And the government have delivered that in this bill. They are increasing public funding. But the meaningful debate about whether these laws stack up and a bill that comes forward that accounts for those concerns has not happened, which is why we do not support them. Of course we do not support them. How could we support them? What, a rigged system? I can understand why the Premier is of a mind to rig the system.

As I said in the conversations around this bill, the focus was on things like West Party matters and their political fortunes in certain Labor-incumbent seats. I get where they are coming from. I do not agree with it, but I get it. I understand where they are coming from. That is their concern. That is what has led the drafting of this bill. It is transparent for all, which is why the law is being rammed through this place. But the moment of judgement will be, if these laws are challenged, what the High Court says. I suspect that not only will the previous judgement see other Labor states' laws fall over, but soon I suspect the federal laws will fall over too, because Labor, in typical form, have copied and pasted Daniel Andrews's laws around other parts of the country. Unfortunately for Labor, when one falls over, they all fall over. I suspect you will see other states' and the federal laws fall over.

What is interesting on the federal position – here is a little bit of an insight – is the federal Labor government is so worried about their standing on their laws that when the state case was being heard in the High Court the federal government had more lawyers in the room than the state government did. What does that tell you? That tells you they are worried. What I understand in relation to the federal law is there is a section in it that says if one single section is unconstitutional, the entire law falls over. It is a complete, 100 per cent clean bill of health that the federal government is seeking with the High Court challenge to the federal laws, or those laws fall over.

As I said, we do not support what Labor has proposed. We do not support rigged laws. We have also committed to reforming them after the election. I have said that clearly. I have said clearly that we will reform these laws if we are elected. I have also said that we are considering our legal position, because my view is these laws are not constitutional. Why wouldn't we consider that? Why wouldn't we consider our legal position? Of course we would. Now that we have the bill, we can consider it in detail, because these laws are unconstitutional. You can see the number of people coming out of the woodwork who have similar views on the validity of the laws that are being proposed, which is why we cannot support them.

These laws entrench incumbency, and they entrench incumbency worse than the laws that were thrown out, because they suffocate new entrants at the same time as disproportionately increasing public funding. I suspect that will be the heart of the challenge to these laws, because in terms of the issues

that exist there are many issues, and I have spoken to some of them. That, in my view, is where these laws fall over, because the government took a policy view to only consider issues relating to nominated entities and ignore the rest of the judgement. Why? Because of politics. This is about rigging the system.

This is about a Premier who is so worried about her own seat that she is announcing sporting events and music concerts in her seat at a rate higher than we have ever seen from a state government in Victoria's history. The only thing she is doing between announcing events in her own seat is doorknocking. Sadly, it does not sound like she is getting much chop. I can understand when you are sitting on a 60–40 in your seat why you would be worried. I get it. When the Premier is sitting on – I should say it the other way – 40–60, I get why they would be worried. I get why you would be putting your sneakers on and trying to announce events in your seat, but rigging the system is not the way to fix it. Victorians will see it; we will not stand for it.

I suspect we will see these laws challenged in the manner that I discussed. Unfortunately, we might see these laws fall over, and no Victorian wants to see that before the election. We have tried in good faith to avoid it. Unfortunately Labor has played politics by trying to rig the system with this bill.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (12:40): Before addressing the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026, I want to begin by picking up on a point that we have already debated with the member for Brighton and the Leader of the Nationals, and that relates to the Statewide Treaty Act 2025 in operation in this state. I just reiterate for their benefit that section 66(3) of that act says that the First Peoples' Assembly will be given an opportunity to be consulted with on bills. It does not say that it is mandatory. I reiterate a point I made in the procedural debate: that if the opposition are going to shamefully oppose treaty, they should at least have the decency to carefully read the act that they are shamefully opposing.

Just picking up again on something that came out of the procedural debate, I want to come back to reiterating the core problem here: there is a gaping hole in our donations system. There is a potential problem of foreign money flowing into Victorian politics, dark money flowing into Victorian politics. That is not good for any of us, but as we discussed in the procedural debate, it is particularly concerning in light of the rise of One Nation and the fact that at least some of those increased One Nation voters are being driven to One Nation by a perception that our system does not have integrity.

I thought that the contribution from the member for Caulfield in the procedural debate, particularly, was astonishing. The member for Caulfield stood in this place and said Labor are rigging the election. He said Labor are funnelling union money to themselves to 'steal an election'. They are the exact words of the member for Caulfield. I want to caution the opposition parties that this is not helping their cause. It is not helping any of our democratic cause, but nor is it helping the cause of anyone currently represented in this chamber. The movement of the Liberals and indeed sometimes the Greens to this hypertabloid populism – TikTok populism – is not benefiting incumbent parties anywhere.

I acknowledge that of course the rise of One Nation is not just being driven by that. There is a very concerning, bigoted, discriminatory, often gendered component to it. But part of it is being driven by people like the member for Caulfield walking around and saying to ordinary Victorians, 'The system is rigged. You can't possibly influence it. Your government is against you. The government is against the people.' It is simply not true. In Victoria and Australia we should all be proud of the fact that we have a reasonably good collective decision-making system. Of course there are places to reform it, and that is what we are doing here today. But walking around and saying the whole system is rigged against you and people cheat and steal elections is wrong. It is populist. I just want to reiterate to the Greens and the Nationals and the Liberals that it is not driving votes to them. It is driving votes to One Nation and the Victorian Socialists, who will always have more credibility claiming that the whole system is rigged, because they are not currently inside it.

Danny O'Brien interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: Through you, Chair, I will not take up the interjection by the Leader of the Nationals. I will make one more point on that, though, which is that the member for Brighton said nobody supports foreign money coming into this country. Nobody supports dark money. I just suggest to the Leader of the Nationals and the member for Brighton that they look a little bit to their right. I worry that some of that may be happening now in their right fringe, and it is a serious concern for all of us.

Having dealt with that, which I think is an absolutely core issue – integrity and the reason we are here to fill a gap that is a very real gap – I also want to turn to what I think personally is the very core problem here, which I do not think was perhaps sufficiently contemplated by the High Court judgement. To go back to absolute basics here, we have always had a bit of a problem in that no legal entity in this country suits a modern political party. Parties are a very important part of our system. We need to have parties. But parties have always faced this very fundamental problem. On the one hand, you want to have internal party rules that allow you to collectively decision-make and play the important role that you play in the system, but if you are going to do that – if you are going to have any political party in this country that plays that role – you cannot be a corporation, because the corporations act has very specific rules that you cannot adhere to and, frankly, quite crude democratic rules that would never work for any political party. You cannot be an incorporated association, because, similarly, it has very crude rules that are very difficult to fashion into a political party. Every political party, with a couple of exceptions, has gone down the same route of deciding it has to be an unincorporated association in order to have its party rules operate. But then you have the problem that an unincorporated association is not a legal entity. Modern political parties are engaged in serious large-scale operations. They canvass people. They book advertising. They run conferences. They do all those sorts of things. In order to do that they need employees, they need assets and they need financial resources. All of those things are best placed within a corporation.

The answer that most parties have reached, and indeed certainly the answer that the Victorian branch of the Labor Party has reached, is you ultimately need to have a hybrid structure that consists of an unincorporated association that has your rules and elects your governing body, and then that governing body controls some sort of holding company into which you put your financial assets and into which you enter into your contractual obligations. That is a perfectly legal, legitimate, defensible way to deal with the fact that there is no good, appropriate legal entity for a political party.

It is very striking to me that the High Court did not really touch on this core challenge we have all had to solve. Indeed the High Court, reading the judgement, appears to believe that if the Labor Party takes some membership revenue, puts it for reasons of good governance into a holding company and then pays out from that membership revenue an invoice to print some how-to-votes, that paying out is a donation or what the Greens actually sometimes refer to as a nefarious slush fund. It is nothing of the sort. It is merely following good governance: moving your money into a vehicle where every bit of governance in this country says you should put it, and then using your members dues to pay for an invoice.

One may ask: why do the Greens in particular characterise it that way? It is because they – uniquely amongst parties, including parties of the left – have adopted what is I suppose a crude mechanism of taking the incorporated association structure and bending it into a political party? Those familiar with the Greens – and in our part of the world in Darebin we have many Greens; we also have some people who have left the Greens – know that parts of their constitution they have attempted to make work, and in fairness I think attempted in good faith to make work, but part 4 of their constitution has always been problematic. Most notably what the Greens have attempted to do – the criticism they get is not only from us but from the Victorian Socialists and others – is that choosing that particular structure means they cannot possibly have affiliated trade unions involved with their party. That is certainly why the Labor Party could never choose that structure.

Ellen Sandell interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: The member for Melbourne is interjecting. I put to her a very serious point that I want to make in this contribution, which is the best solution to this would be for all of us to get together and create a legal entity that actually works for political parties properly. In fact the member for Belmont in Western Australia Cassie Rowe and I once put this to Gary Gray when he was Special Minister of State. I still think, and I will put it to Senator Farrell – a very good Special Minister of State – that the feds need to think about this problem, which is that we really do need an entity that suits political parties. All the problems we have here, all the confusion of the High Court about nominated entities and everything like that, come back to this same problem, that it is still impossible in this country to set up a political party without using a slightly unwieldy hybrid arrangement of an unincorporated association and then something else that serves to hold your assets.

If I can add one final thing to that particular point, if it were just Labor Services & Holdings – and for the Nationals, Leader of the Nationals, I think it is called Pilliwinks; they sort of do the same thing – or if it were just us and the Greens, I do not think we would actually have a problem. If it were just us, the Nationals and the Greens, I do not think we would have the problem, because the real problem here – the Leader of the Nationals himself in the procedural debate said, 'Whose fault is this?'– is the Cormack Foundation. The one party that has a structure that is really problematic is the Liberal Party, because not only does the Cormack Foundation have $90 million or whatever it is sitting in it but its problem, as the Liberal Party found out themselves in a very famous court case in the Federal Court, is it is not solely controlled by the Liberal Party but is somewhat independent. It is 50 per cent playing the role that Pilliwinks and Labor Services & Holdings are playing, but it is also slightly independent. I think that is really why the nominated entity section was a great problem for the High Court, because it is very difficult when you consider the Cormack Foundation and what to do with it.

The real correct public policy outcome here is that we get in place a decent legal structure at some point, led by the federal government, that allows political parties to solve the hybrid problem that I have talked about, and then the Liberal Party give up on the Cormack Foundation or – and this may actually appeal to them – simply bring it within their structure so it is fully controlled with their party and it plays the same role that these holding companies play with other parties here in Victoria and indeed with other parties of different political flavours right around this country.

Having stepped through I suppose what I see as the core problem we are solving here, I just want to point out that the solution we have today is urgent. Notwithstanding those broader challenges, it is the best that we can put together, given the circumstances we find ourselves in, and I commend it wholly to the house.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:50): I will begin on the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026 by saying that, yes, as the member for Brighton indicated, we will be opposing this legislation. We came to it with good intentions, with an openness to negotiating with the government and to working through the decisions in the High Court. I think, though, that perhaps some of the issues that we have now seen in this bill that is being rushed through the Parliament were highlighted by the member for Preston's commentary just now that somehow this is all the Liberal Party's fault. Far be it from me as Leader of the Nationals to defend the Liberal Party, but hello, we are in this situation because of the legislation that your government introduced back before 2018. That is not the Liberal Party or Cormack's fault, it is because you messed up that legislation. No-one was desperately saying we had to have legislation to fix this situation with donations and elections. It was Daniel Andrews and your government – their government, Acting Speaker – that caused this. For the member for Preston to now say we are in this situation because of the Cormack Foundation and the Liberal Party is pretty rich.

It is also incumbent on me to say we absolutely think there needs to be a fair system. But the principles are pretty clear here: either you say people can make donations to political parties and influence elections to whatever extent that they want, or you say they cannot do it and the public then has to pay for it through taxpayer funds, because elections cost money. I would prefer that taxpayers did not have to bear the burden of it, but I understand – the perception, at least – that if big donations are being

made, that may have an influence on decisions being made by governments in the future. It is about getting the balance right, and I think that is what is being attempted here. But I do not believe that we are in fact getting the balance right.

As the member for Preston indicated, this whole legislation, the reform in the last couple of weeks, has come about because of the actions in the High Court and the decision in the High Court on 15 April. I will not reflect on the High Court's judgement in this respect, but there is a bit of a principle here that is a problem in that the major parties, which some might call the legacy parties – the parties that have been around a long time, the Labor Party for over 100 years, the Nationals for 110 years and I think the Libs for around 80-odd years – not surprisingly have built up some reserves in that time and actually tried to look after their own interests. And effectively we are being penalised for that, because now the funds that those parties have actually saved over time through their fundraising, through whatever activities and investments, are no longer going to be available to us for running campaigns. I think as a principle that is a concern, notwithstanding that is the situation we have got to.

It is a concern to me, I guess, that what this legislation does is potentially only going to open us up to a constitutional challenge. The member for Brighton has a legal background; he has outlined his views. We have just been joined by the member for Malvern, who, I have said before, I am glad I am not following, because he is a former barrister and it would be like – who did I say at the time? – Justin Bieber following Pavarotti if I were to try and give my legal opinion versus that of the member for Malvern. But nonetheless I think there is a very serious risk that the legislation that is before us will be challenged again. In fact it is almost certain, from what I am hearing, and that is about this issue of entrenchment. The additional public funding for administration of the parties, including independents, in this legislation I think will go to that to a degree.

I have not had time to read the second-reading speech, because we only got it an hour ago. We certainly have not heard from anyone on the government side justifying why the public funding for administration needs to be increased. But I think that in itself will be a concern for the High Court in terms of making sure that we have equality of opportunity for all entrants, new or otherwise, when it comes to running elections.

I have said before that when it comes to support from the public – whether it is corporations, whether it is individuals, whether it is workers or whether it is small businesses – they often will support the candidate or the political party that they believe supports them. I remember many years ago an independent – an independent who represented Gippsland East actually – having a crack at the Nationals for supporting the timber industry because we got a donation from the Heyfield mill. I remember pointing out to a journalist at the time that perhaps the Heyfield mill supported us because we support the timber industry. That is actually how it works, and that should be the case in a free and fair democracy where people are entitled to literally put their money where their mouth is.

Members interjecting.

Danny O'BRIEN: I am hearing a little bit of caterwauling starting from over there, but it is exactly the same reason that the Labor unions support the Labor Party. They take their members' money and make no bones about the fact that they are there to support the Labor Party. They want to see a Labor Party in government, and that is entirely up to them. Where it gets tricky under this legislation and under the arrangements that this government has put together is that we now have a situation where exactly that will happen. Unions will be able to continue to support the ALP through affiliation fees, but we on this side of Parliament will not get that same opportunity. I know members of my party have a view on this. Repeatedly they ask me, 'Hang on, isn't it true that the Labor Party can still get affiliation fees from the unions and we can't get donations above what is now going to be $7500?' The answer to that is yes. That is not free and fair, so I do not know how in a legal sense that can be allowed to be the case. That is a concern when it comes to it.

It is often suggested that the parties of the right get all the big corporate money. Well, I can say from the Nationals' perspective that is not the case. Yes, we have supporters, and we have corporate supporters too, but predominantly our elections are run and supported by locals, by local small businesses and by some medium businesses. As I said, they are people who support the ideals of our party, and they should be able to continue to do that. They are considerably constrained in doing that by the laws that were brought in, as I said, by the former Premier after the 2018 election, and those laws were clearly flawed. They were thrown out by the High Court, and my concern is that this legislation will go the same way. It is setting up an unfair situation where the Labor Party gets its dues from the unions, literally, and the rest of us are constrained by these new laws.

There is one aspect that I will give credit to. It is relatively minor, but it has been a considerable issue, and that is the issue that the Liberals and Nationals run joint upper house tickets in three of the regions in Victoria, and on the public funding that comes to the parties from that, we actually had to take the Victorian Electoral Commission to court to get access to our share of it. We had an agreement with the Liberal Party as part of the coalition arrangements, and the VEC said, 'No, we can only pay it under the act to the Liberal Party.' Naturally we had an arrangement, and it was agreed. That public funding was delivered to us, but we actually had to go to court to have that upheld. I believe new section 228(4) in this bill does address that, so that if there are joint parties, whoever they might be, running on a joint ticket, they can provide correspondence to the VEC indicating an agreed share of public funding as a share of the vote that is received and that will be delivered to those parties. That is the one good thing in this legislation that the Nationals will certainly be happy to see addressed.

I think the government will be standing here today – and we have already heard it from the member for Preston – talking to us about integrity and telling us this is about ensuring the integrity of elections, when we have seen one of the least ethical governments in our history. With the issues that we have seen in recent years, in particular with the Big Build, where a blind eye has been turned, it is absolutely hypocritical for the government to now be standing here and lecturing us on integrity, particularly in a circumstance where the High Court judgement was on 15 April and we are now on 3 June and this is being rushed through in a day without proper scrutiny and anyone having the opportunity to address this. We will oppose this legislation, and I think the High Court may well do so as well.

Sitting suspended 1:00 pm until 2:02 pm.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Members

Minister for First Peoples

Minister for Tourism

Absence

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I wish to advise the house that for the purposes of question time today I will answer questions for the portfolio of First Peoples, the Minister for Transport Infrastructure will answer questions for the portfolio of roads and road safety, the Minister for Sport and Major Events will answer questions for the portfolio of community sport and the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs will answer questions for the portfolios of veterans, tourism, employment, and small and family business.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Youth strategy

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (14:03): My question is to the Minister for Youth. Victoria's youth strategy commits the government to increasing young people's understanding of consent, their rights and the different forms of family and sexual violence. Why should Victorians have confidence

in the minister's implementation of that strategy when the minister abused her position of trust to give a character reference to a taxidriver convicted of indecently assaulting female passengers?

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Speaker, I feel that the member is seeking an opinion.

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

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:04): I thank the member for her question. I want to start off by saying that every woman has the right to feel safe in their home, in their workplace and in their community. I am not going to go into other people's circumstances, but I will say this: my processes were not strong enough, I have apologised and that happened yesterday.

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (14:04): Why should young Victorians take the government's consent and sexual violence strategy seriously when the minister sided with a convicted domestic violence offender rather than the Commonwealth, which was seeking to deport him?

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:04): I again thank the member for her question. As a local member I provided references to help working people. My processes were not strong enough, and I should not have done it. I take responsibility for that, and I have apologised for it.

Ministers statements: early childhood education and care

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:05): Labor knows affordable, accessible kinder is not just about giving our kids the best start in life; it is about making sure we are giving families more money back in their pocket and also more money back in their day. That is why we are delivering free kinder at more than 100 childcare centres on school sites, giving parents that single drop-off we know they have been calling for for many years. This year alone we have opened 19 new schools, with 24 new kinders on school sites as well. But while we are putting money back into kindergartens, those opposite are more interested in taking money out of them. We all know they stole Free Fruit Friday.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Croydon! Member for Bulleen, this is your last warning.

Ben CARROLL: But if that was not enough, the Leader of the Opposition campaigned with someone who stole money from his daughter's own kindergarten. I have the Leader of the Opposition's maiden speech with me right here, and she said:

> … integrity is more than a buzzword … bodies like IBAC … play a crucial role …

But now she is refusing to back Labor's laws that will strengthen IBAC and expand the definition of 'corruption'.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Deputy Premier is required to be factual, and that is a complete lie. I said the exact opposite this morning.

Ben CARROLL: On the point of order, Speaker, I am comparing and contrasting. I am just contrasting our position on integrity and our investment in kindergartens compared to those opposite.

Danny O'Brien: On the point of order, Speaker, as it relates to being factual, there are no laws before us and will not be for at least 18 months.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Nationals, that was not a helpful response to the point of order. On the point of order, it is a requirement of all members of this house to be factual. I ask members to be mindful of unparliamentary language as well.

Ben CARROLL: We know, whether it is in question time in Parliament backing laws that we know our state needs, whether it is on Instagram or whether it is on Twitter, families will be asking themselves: if those opposite are prepared to stand by their record on stealing money from kindergartens and prepared to stand by their record on cutting education funding, what will they steal from you come November?

Youth strategy

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (14:08): My question is to the Minister for Youth. Victoria's youth strategy commits the government to ensuring young people are safe, supported and connected with positive role models. Jonny 'Two Guns' Walker, former bikie and CFMEU figure and convicted killer, was enlisted to campaign for the minister. Why should young Victorians trust the minister to keep criminal influence away from young people when criminal figures were helping her get elected?

The SPEAKER: I call the Minister for Youth to answer the question as it relates to her portfolio.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:09): I would like to again thank the member for her question, and I will start with saying that the question is out of my portfolio responsibilities and is best referred to the relevant minister, being criminal activity on worksites. It is a serious issue and it must face the full force of the law. We acted immediately and our plan is working. Police have laid 70 criminal charges.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I am not sure how the minister's commitment to the youth strategy is not within her portfolio, or who is electioneering on her booths for her.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: If we want to talk about youth, I want to talk about the $33 million that is being invested in young Victorians in 2026–27. We have engaged 135,000 young people through the Amplify, the Engage! and the Future Ready programs. We have delivered the Victorian Youth Fest 2025, which included 110 youth-led events for over 15,000 young people across the state, with $5.3 million for a new multicultural youth employment program and 28 Scout hall projects delivered since 2018, and we have supported more than 5300 young people.

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (14:11): As the minister responsible for Victoria's youth strategy, Minister, what message does it send to young Victorians when the minister responsible for youth is backed not by positive role models but by figures convicted of fatal bashings, like Jonny 'Two Guns' Walker?

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Speaker, the member is clearly asking for an opinion that is not related to the minister's portfolio. It is very clearly an opinion.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, there was at no point in that question a request for an opinion. The question went directly to the government's policy and the implications, as the minister, of the minister's actions on that policy.

The SPEAKER: I will allow the question, and I will allow the minister to respond as it relates to her portfolio.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:12): I reject the premise of the question.

Ministers statements: victims of crime

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (14:12): I am pleased to update the house on the support the Allan government is providing to victims of crime. Any victim of crime is one victim too many. That is why on this side of the house some half a billion dollars has been provided

to victims of crime to give them the support that they need. We stand with victims of crime; we do not support perpetrators of crime. We have invested some $420 million in funding.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, I hope you know better. The house will come to order. If you wish to raise a point of order, it will be heard in silence, as will the minister's statement.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I again go back to the request that the minister be factual. As we have seen today, a minister has been backing multiple crooks and –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members once again that there is an expectation that all members in this house will be factual.

Anthony CARBINES: Let us go to some facts. 50,000 victims of crime have received up to $78 million in funding support through the financial assistance scheme established by our government to support victims of crime. Over 50,000 of those victims have received up to $78 million thanks to our government, while those opposite seek to grandstand on slogans and promote criminals in prime-time viewing. That is what you did in the kindergartens –

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. The minister will respond through the Chair, not across the table.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, attacking the opposition is out of order in a ministers statement.

The SPEAKER: The minister will come back to his ministers statement.

Anthony CARBINES: The financial assistance scheme established by our government has put half a billion dollars towards that fund. It has supported 50,000 victims of crime to secure $78 million in funding support for a range of issues that they needed support with. While our government continues to stand with victims of crime, in comparing and contrasting other policies, those opposite seek to stand with those who are convicted criminals who swipe $220,000 from kinders in the suburbs.

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, I will sit you down now.

Youth strategy

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (14:15): My question is to the Minister for Youth. The minister has previously told this place that:

> I am passionate about assisting domestic violence victims.

As the minister responsible for Victoria's youth strategy, what message does it send to Victorian young women that she is even more passionate about assisting convicted sex and domestic violence offenders by giving them character references?

The SPEAKER: Some questions require the minister to respond and for an opinion, but I do ask the minister to respond as it relates to her portfolio.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:15): I again thank the member for Warrandyte for her question. We care about young people – men, women, all young people – the end. I will say, though, that every woman, young and old, has the right to feel safe in their home, in their community and in their workplace. In relation to the letters that you are referring to, as the local member I provided references to working people. My processes were not strong enough. I should not have done it and I take responsibility for it, responsibility that many of you have not taken.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Polwarth can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (14:16): As the minister responsible for Victoria's youth strategy, will the minister provide character references for every young woman harassed, intimidated, sexually exploited or forced to perform sex acts on Big Build sites, or does she reserve these for wife-beaters and sex offenders?

The SPEAKER: Again I ask the minister to respond as it relates to her portfolio.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:17): I thank the member for her question. I am focused on getting on with the job, and that is delivering for young people, for carers and for volunteers.

Ministers statements: economic policy

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Sport and Major Events) (14:17): I rise to update the house on the Allan Labor government's plan to grow the economy. We have unlocked more than $25 billion in private sector investment since the release of our economic growth strategy in December 2024. While those opposite talk down the economy, while they are standing next to convicted fraudsters who stole more than $224,000 from a kindergarten in my electorate – and the Leader of the Liberal Party is standing next to that fraudster –

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Brighton withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: I remind the minister to direct his comments through the Chair. I also remind members that it is not appropriate to attack the opposition in a ministers statement.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is required to be factual. The minister himself has been to this restaurant and had photographs with the very person that he is accusing the member of –

Steve Dimopoulos interjected.

David Southwick: Many times you have been there.

The SPEAKER: The member for Caulfield and the minister will leave the chamber for an hour. I will not tolerate this kind of debate across the chamber.

Member for Caulfield and Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs withdrew from chamber.

Firearms regulation

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (14:19): My question is for the Premier. In 2017 an Australian man was granted a licence to own an unlimited number of guns in New Zealand. Two years later, he used six guns to murder 51 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch. In 2023 a terrorist was granted a licence to own an unlimited number of guns. Two years later, he and his son used six guns to murder 15 mostly Jewish Australians in Bondi. Premier, despite this, your government has rejected recommendation 1 of the Lay firearms review to cap the number of guns that a person can own. Is the Premier prioritising the high number of licensed gun owners in her own electorate above keeping Victorians safe from mass shootings?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:20): In answering the member for Richmond's question, can I reject in the strongest possible terms the characterisation at the end of her question of the reasons that we are, in terms of the response we have made to the Lay report, currently working on strengthening Victoria's firearm laws. Prior to the announcement I made last Monday afternoon,

following cabinet's consideration of the Lay report, Victoria already had the strongest firearm laws in the nation. What occurred at Bondi in December of last year was a shocking antisemitic attack on a Jewish community celebrating a festival that is about light and hope. It was a shocking, disgraceful terrorist attack that is being dealt with by investigative agencies. As a result of asking Ken Lay, a former chief commissioner, to consider Victoria's firearms laws, we have resolved as a government that, yes, we do need to strengthen those laws further to stop the wrong people getting their hands on even one firearm. That is the focus of the laws that we are changing. We need to focus on those criminals getting their hands on even one gun, which is why we are making gun laws in this state stronger, with tougher penalties, stricter licensing requirements and stronger police powers. I am of the view that the overwhelming majority of firearm owners do the right thing. They are careful with their handling of their firearms. They take their responsibilities very, very seriously. Where our effort and focus need to be is on the criminals getting their hands on even one firearm and weeding out those who want to do the wrong thing and cause harm in our community.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (14:22): I thank the Premier for her answer. The fact of the matter is the more guns that are in circulation the more likely they are to end up in the wrong hands. In focusing on criminals or the wrong people as the sole source of excessive gun ownership and mass shootings, these words remind me of the argument that is used by the US National Rifle Association to justify unlimited gun ownership. They literally say we should focus on gun criminals and not place an undue burden on law-abiding citizens. That is reminiscent of what the Premier just said. Why is the Premier taking talking points from the US gun lobby, rather than accepting overwhelming expert evidence and the will of the majority of Victorians to cap gun ownership and keep Victorians safe?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:23): This is an incredibly serious matter, which is why, in carefully considering the report from Ken Lay, we are taking Victoria's already strong firearm laws and making them even stronger. I am not convinced that a cap is necessary, because, as I said before, the vast majority of gun owners do not do the wrong thing. They take their responsibilities very, very seriously. The characterisation of those firearm owners by the member for Richmond is a great discredit to her, because it is clear that she has not taken the time to talk to firearm owners – to talk to farmers, to hunters and to those who need firearms to go about their work. I have. They take their responsibilities seriously, and we as a government are focused on weeding out the criminals and stopping them from getting their hands on just one gun.

Ministers statements: cost of living

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Cost of Living, Minister for Renters, Minister for Men and Boys) (14:24): I rise to update the house on how our government is doing the work to put money back in the pockets of Victorian families. We know that the cost of living is putting pressure on family budgets and family time. They are feeling it at the petrol pump; they are feeling it at the family kitchen table. They are feeling it in every walk of life, and only this side of the chamber has a real plan to back families. A great example of this is that, within 48 hours of it opening, more than 1 million Victorians have applied for 20 per cent off their rego. And I dare say a lot of them have too. That is 1 million families getting the help they need right now, because Labor backs them. At the petrol pump our fair fuel plan is also helping families save money every single week. We will always do everything we can to back Victorian families, because after all that is what we are here for.

I will tell you what we will not do. We will not stand up alongside criminals who rip money from the pockets of Victorian families, because there is only one side of the chamber with a history of that – eating a lobster with a mobster –

The SPEAKER: I ask the minister to not hit the table during his ministers statement.

Michael O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, when the youth minister has been giving references to criminals, like Joe Biden with an autopen –

The SPEAKER: Order! What is your point of order?

Michael O'Brien: It is wrong for the minister to attack the opposition. You have drawn a number of ministers' attention to that protocol before.

The SPEAKER: State your point of order succinctly, member for Malvern. I remind the minister that it is not appropriate to attack the opposition. Come back to your ministers statement.

Paul EDBROOKE: Thank you, Speaker, and I take that on board. But there is only one side of this chamber that has been caught out campaigning with a con man, someone who took money from kinder kids. Standing next to someone who took money from kinder kids at a campaign opportunity – who was that?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am loath to remove any more members from the chamber, member for South-West Coast.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is clearly defying the ruling you just gave him.

The SPEAKER: Minister, if you cannot come back to your ministers statement, then I ask you to stay in your seat.

Paul EDBROOKE: Victorians need real action right now, and that is what this side of the house is consistently delivering for our communities. We are not there dealing with people who steal from kinder kids. We are not out there –

Danny O'Brien: I renew the point of order, Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The minister will stay in his seat.

Youth strategy

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for Youth. Victoria's youth strategy says young Victorians should live free from harm and abuse, understand the different forms of family violence and build healthy and respectful relationships. John Setka pleaded guilty to harassing his wife and breaching a family violence order and has an extensive criminal history. The minister then publicly backed him and recently said she has 'no regrets whatsoever' about her friendship with him. How can the minister credibly implement that strategy when she stood by John Setka, a man she called her 'brother'?

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Speaker, merely referencing a strategy in a minister's portfolio and then asking a question totally unrelated to the portfolio is not in order.

Danny O'Brien: On the point of order, Speaker, it was very clear what the strategy contains, including harm and abuse –

The SPEAKER: Order! What is your point of order?

Danny O'Brien: I am responding to his point of order.

The SPEAKER: But what is your point of order in response?

Danny O'Brien: That it was completely relevant, Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. That is all you needed to say, Leader of the Nationals. I invite the minister to respond as it relates to her portfolio.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:28): I thank the member for her question. I will first of all say that the youth strategy is one that

this side of the table is very proud of, and I am proud that the Allan Labor government has invested $33 million in youth in this budget. What I will tell you, though, is that I refer to my previous answer, and the only reason that youth would be under pressure would be the threat from Liberal cuts from that side of the table.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:29): Given the minister has previously vouched for John Setka, will she now provide a character reference for Mick Gatto too, given his role as a standover man for her brother John Setka?

The SPEAKER: The member for Mildura will need to rephrase her question so it relates to government business.

Jade BENHAM: Given that Victoria's youth strategy says young Victorians should live free from harm and abuse, understand the different forms of family violence and build healthy and respectful relationships, does the minister have a healthy enough relationship with Mick Gatto to write him a character reference too?

Anthony Carbines: I renew my earlier point of order, Speaker, in relation to relevance.

The SPEAKER: I invite the minister to respond as it relates to her portfolio.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:30): I will say this: I am focused on one thing, and that is delivering for young people, volunteers and carers.

Ministers statements: early childhood education and care

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:31): Our government believes that every child deserves the best start in life, and that is why we have made kinder free – not just because it saves families money, and that in itself is incredibly important, but also because it gives every child the opportunity to learn and grow. It gives parents, women most particularly, more choice – the choice to return to work, to study, to pick up extra shifts. At a time when we know that so many families are under pressure, we know that matters because that extra shift, that little bit more work, can help pay the rent, the mortgage or the groceries.

I want to acknowledge that none of this happens without our hardworking early childhood educators and teachers. They are the ones who take that free kinder opportunity and turn it into supporting our kids to learn, speak, play, share and grow. That is why we are backing teachers and early childhood educators with more kinders, more childcare centres, more training, more scholarships and a historic pay rise for early childcare workers too, because we know that when you back the workers you back children. You are also supporting families and supporting women, and core to our Labor values is backing working people. While we will continue this work to support our kinders and to support our early childhood workers, the Liberal Party continue to back a bloke who stole from one. We will continue to support our early childhood educators.

Michael O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is again straying into attacking the opposition on exactly the same issue you have made rulings on four times so far.

The SPEAKER: The Premier will come back to the ministers statement.

Jacinta ALLAN: We understand that the videos have disappeared, but the truth has not. We will continue to back our early childhood educators. We will continue to back our kids in kinder and support them to have the best opportunity to learn, to develop and to grow under our Labor government.

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge in the gallery the Honourable Marsha Thomson, a former minister and member for Footscray.

Constituency questions

Kew electorate

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:34): (1658) My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Has the minister considered increasing the frequency of the route 200 bus along Bulleen Road to allow better connection to Bulleen park-and-ride for the residents of North Balwyn? Many residents have reached out to raise their concerns about the planned removal of the city-bound bus stop at the Bulleen Road entry ramp to the Eastern Freeway. Residents rely on this stop for their daily commute and are worried about the impact its removal will have on their ability to get to and from the city and access bus services. Minister, the residents of North Balwyn deserve an improved connection to the Bulleen park-and-ride by increasing the frequency of the route 200 bus, and we look forward to your response.

Thomastown electorate

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (14:35): (1659) My question is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport. The outer suburbs of Wollert and North Epping are still growing, and the state government has continued to build the infrastructure we need: new schools, community centres, kinders, community hospitals, bike paths and parks, not to mention the much-needed Epping Road upgrade. We are also thinking about the public transport needed to get to these facilities, the station and jobs. Minister, what is the outcome of the public consultation to determine the new bus routes and extended bus services?

Berwick electorate

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:35): (1660) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. What advice has the minister received regarding the proposed extension of Thompsons Road through to Cardinia, particularly in relation to the opportunities for this project to create local jobs, employment and economic growth in the Pakenham area and Berwick area? Thompsons Road is a road that many have already seen cause delays. People cannot get home, but the biggest issue is the connection between Casey and Cardinia going over the river. We know there has been lots of study and research done on that, not just in relation to jobs but making sure people can get home earlier, as well as the potential to open up to 40,000 jobs through the growth corridor down there. I would like to ask what advice the minister has received.

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (14:36): (1661) My constituency question is for the Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts. What was the outcome of community consultation recently undertaken in relation to the future of the former Kangan Batman TAFE site in North Coburg? Following significant community advocacy alongside locals, I was delighted to announce that Development Victoria would be seeking feedback to help inform the future uses of this 1.83 hectares of strategic land over September, October and November 2025. The consultation sought views from locals on future land zoning, community benefits and potential new businesses and organisations that the community would like to see. Substantive consultation took place via the delivery of 8700 promotional postcards; online via Engage Victoria, with 250 responses and 135 submissions and ideas; and via two community pop-ups, on 23 and 25 October, with 75 per cent of participants identified as local. I did a lot of doorknocking as well. I am very pleased that Development Victoria has this week publicly released the community consultation summary report, which identified some of the key themes and priorities locals are seeking, including support for employment, innovation and social enterprises – a Merri-bek community men's shed was a good suggestion – as well as arts facilities, maker spaces, performance spaces and much more.

Mildura electorate

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:37): (1662) My question is for the Minister for Ambulance Services and comes from ambulance members who work out of the Irymple station. My question is: is the Irymple ambulance station on the radar for upgrades or relocation? The Irymple station was founded in 2007 when the current building on Fifteenth Street was acquired by AV from Lower Murray Water. This building was never fit for purpose. It was originally designed, constructed and used by Lower Murray Water, until they upgraded their own facilities and relocated. It is now the understanding that the building was then gifted to Ambulance Victoria to use under the current conditions as a temporary station. I am asking the Minister for Ambulance Services if the Irymple ambulance station is on the radar for upgrades.

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (14:38): (1663) My question is to the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop. What level of disruption would communities like Glen Waverley face if those opposite were elected and proceeded with their reckless plan to pause and review the Suburban Rail Loop? In recent months my constituents have seen significant progress at the Glen Waverley SRL site. Piling works are now well underway as part of the major site establishment works that will pave the way for the construction of a 17-metre-deep underground station box. These substantial works naturally do not come without some unavoidable disruptions. I want to thank local residents, traders and commuters for their patience as this transformational project continues to ramp up. While the Allan Labor government is getting on with delivering the SRL and preparing to launch tunnel-boring machines later this year, the Liberals still cannot tell Victorians where they stand on the project. In fact the Leader of the Opposition's Liberals now have more positions on the SRL than there are stations on the line. Their latest proposal is to pause and review this nation-building project. Anyone who has visited the eastern suburbs recently knows these sites are already hives of activity, with more than 3000 workers on the ground.

Melbourne electorate

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:39): (1664) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. What is the government doing to fix urgent traffic safety issues in my electorate, specifically two issues? Four months ago I stood right here and warned that the West Gate Tunnel was bringing giant trucks onto tiny streets in Kensington. Today my office is still getting daily horror stories. One resident saw a truck recently run a red light outside Kensington Primary School at 3:30 on a school day, and you can hear the kids' screams on the security footage. The community is calling for no-truck zones like they have in Footscray and Yarraville. The second issue is in Carlton, and I welcome the news the government and the city council are finally investigating upgrades to dangerous intersections along Rathdowne Street near Carlton Gardens Primary School after advocacy from my office and the school council. Parents have long been asking for changes to make the lights of the pedestrian crossing longer, for an additional crossing guard and for changes to make the intersection at Grattan Street and Rathdowne Street much safer. Some of these are easy fixes, some of them are longer, but they are absolutely necessary. I would love to know whether the government will actually do them.

Cranbourne electorate

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (14:40): (1665) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. How many students will benefit from the recently announced budget funding for Marnebek School's outside school hours care program? Marnebek School is a terrific special development school, as the minister at the table, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, knows, in the heart of Cranbourne. Having been completely refurbished in the last few years, the students are thriving and contributing to our strong, resilient and optimistic community. I was particularly pleased to telephone principal Chris Murray recently to let him know that the Allan Labor government will fund outside school hours care for our wonderful students. Not only will this funding support an

inclusive OSHC program, but it takes pressure off parents and carers who are working hard and need that extra time in the day. I very much look forward to the minister's response.

Evelyn electorate

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:41): (1666) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety about dangerous roads and intersections I have raised here in Parliament many times before. When will the government allocate funds to upgrade Clegg Road at the dangerous intersection with Wellington Road in Wandin North? This is a notoriously dangerous intersection on a busy state road. Accidents continue to occur, and the rumble strips and larger signs are not enough to prevent the accidents that local emergency services and residents tell me happen every six to eight weeks. The minister has stated that upgrading the intersection would be based on the historical safety record of the site. The Department of Transport and Planning know there are repeated accidents here – another just the other week – some resulting in fatalities. VicRoads have visited a few times over the past year for assessments. They know it is dangerous and needs fixing and should share their findings, yet there are no flashing signals installed or structural safety upgrades for the intersection. I thank our emergency services, including Wandin CFA and Yarra Ranges police, and also local residents for their tremendous efforts when accidents occur here. But they are sick of it and deserve to see upgrades to make the intersection safer.

Narre Warren South electorate

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:42): (1667) My constituency question is for the Minister for Community Sport and concerns the newly upgraded pavilion at Grices Road recreational reserve. Minister, how did the upgrades benefit my constituents in Narre Warren South? Home to Berwick Churches Soccer Club and Berwick Strikers Cricket Club, Grices Road recreational reserve is a popular ground that sees many players, volunteers and spectators attending every week. I have advocated for upgrades to the reserve alongside Daniel Prins and the team from Berwick Churches Soccer Club for many years, and I was pleased to help secure $1.2 million in 2023 for the upgrade, alongside a contribution from the City of Casey as well. Well, the work is finally complete, and the modern and inclusive pavilion has now reopened for these great local sports clubs to enjoy. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, I bring the attention of the house to questions 1659, 1598 and 1591, all of which are overdue.

Bills

Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (14:43): I have been keenly listening to the various arguments that have been spoken across the chamber pertaining to this particular bill, which has some absolutely urgent reforms, and I am dismayed by what I would suggest is the rather irresponsible manner in which in particular the opposition have been portraying not only the intention of but the functionality that should result following the successful passing of this bill. We know at present there is a very grave risk of our electoral system literally being sold to the highest bidder, because we do not have the appropriate controls in place that are in the best interests of everyone in the Parliament as a result of the High Court decision in *Hopper v Victoria*. I also want to concur with one of the very salient points mentioned by the member for Preston, and that is the very real risk that when you distort these fundamental tenets that underpin the critical protections that I think we all value for our electoral system, you further disenchant those who otherwise would consider, I think, a logical strength in governance that we all value.

I am going to give an example. This is not a common matter that I have encountered in doorknocking, but I did have a constituent who was considering One Nation, and she was dismayed because she said, 'Oh, it's such a pity that the national anthem is no longer sung in schools.' And I said, 'I beg your pardon?' She said, 'Well, only in private schools.' I said, 'No. I attend the public schools' – and private schools as well – 'and I attend public school assemblies all the time.' I think many of us can reflect in this chamber that the national anthem is sung with pride, and actually I will say I choke up when I hear it, because I am very patriotic myself. But such is the level of mythical information that is highly unfortunate and being distributed, essentially on social media, that I think there is a general responsibility among all of us to be as accurate as possible. Accuracy is absolutely paramount, particularly when debating a matter that fundamentally underpins the electoral system that I would otherwise contend to be one of the best, if not the best, in the world, save for the fact that we do need to urgently pass these controls to ensure that our elections are not handballed to billionaires and others who might seek to, for want of a better word, purchase our elections. I do not think that is in the interests of any of us. Furthermore, seeking to distort and to sully the intent of the Labor Party with regard to these reforms not only undermines the government but undermines the Parliament as a whole. So it is counterproductive to be feathering these kinds of spurious arguments.

I am not saying we should not have a rigorous debate. That is absolutely the premise of Parliament, and it is in all our interests to have a rigorous debate, and we certainly welcome those raising particular points that they have concerns about. However, the opposition are grossly distorting the intent to disguise what I think is actually at the core of the opposition to this bill, and I am going to go to a couple of these points. The Electoral Act 2002 has always allowed parties to receive affiliation fees from associated entities. This is not specific to unions or Labor. There is nothing in this bill to preclude the opposition undertaking structural reform, but it is not the role of the Parliament, let alone the government, to undertake the necessary structural reform that the Liberal Party may wish to undertake. Maybe they just cannot agree; I do not know, and I do not wish to cast further aspersions because I am not in their party. But they certainly have at their discretion to undertake that appropriate structural reform rather than undermining and blunting the whole process of furthering these very important electoral reforms that we are debating here in the bill in front of us.

Furthermore, affiliation fees from associated entities can only be used for administrative funding. I think it is very important, again, to be accurate. When you are referring to critical elements that underpin the reforms that we are debating that we have before the chamber at this time, you do not distort elements which can only further disenchant certain members of our community – who I absolutely respect. I absolutely respect the broad spectrum of perspectives that people can develop over time, and I am not here to put down one or another opinion that people may form. I get that social media can be incredibly influential, irrespective of what is behind the particular points that are being tried on for the benefit of undermining major political parties – and you will note I said 'parties' plural. So I think in the interests of the Parliament as a whole, it would be to our benefit to adhere to what this bill is actually seeking to do.

Furthermore, I think it is very important that we do not distort the premise upon which the Premier spoke in responding to the matter that was before the High Court, *Hopper v Victoria*. The Premier said:

> The High Court's decision to strike down Victoria's long-standing electoral integrity laws leaves our state exposed to dark money in politics.

And there is no shying away from that. Sorry, they were my own words. I will go back to her quote:

> Right now, money could be flowing from foreign billionaires into political party bank accounts – with no limits, no disclosure, and no oversight.
>
> The Government will immediately move to restore Victoria's electoral integrity regime within the limits of the High Court's ruling.
>
> We can't allow anyone to exploit this current period to solicit huge donations and move money around secretly.

And finally:

> Our legislation will make sure that every party and every candidate will be accountable for every dollar they receive from this day onwards.

I know I take great comfort in having – and this was pre the Hopper decision – every cent that is donated accounted for. It is absolutely reassuring. It is reassuring not only to me as a local member and to the government but actually to the decent supporters who turn up for the trivia nights and everything else. They want to know that money is tracked and used appropriately as well. We are accountable to them, as I am sure and I hope the opposition and other members of the Parliament are as well.

So I think as part of displaying integrity – not only displaying but in action as opposed to words in terms of the broader community – it is upon us to duly pass these reforms as expediently as possible, noting that there has to be absolute rigour in the debate. That is certainly welcome. But perhaps we could resile from flagrant distortion of the fundamental underpinnings of this bill. And if the opposition need to make structural reform, please go forward and do so, but do not undermine the Parliament and fundamentally sell out the Victorian community. They deserve to have the transparency and accountability that we are bringing before the Parliament here and now.

The Premier was not in any way backward in terms of stating exactly the intention of the reforms. I have read to the chamber an exact quote of her words. It is not as if this is some kind of surprise. She did forecast that we would bring forward necessary reforms. Even right now as we speak the overseas donations and otherwise unaccounted-for money make me feel nauseous, to say the least, because I know that we should respect the wonderful democracy that we have as a country but also as a state. Therefore I hope that the opposition will pull their thumb out, get on board and actually debate this bill with respect but without perhaps exposing their own structural vulnerabilities, which they absolutely have the discretion to correct and otherwise see fit to ensure that the community are not further disenchanted – not as a whole, there are certain sections, and I pay respect to the spectrum of responses. But I think it is upon us to have some dignity and honour in this debate and pass this bill accordingly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members about unparliamentary language. It has been ruled that pulling one's digit out is unparliamentary.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (14:53): Well, apart from that particular phrase, a lot of hifalutin words from the member for Albert Park about a bill which is essentially trying to rig the playing field to support the Labor government and prop up a dying government at this election so they can get one more lick of the ice cream is what this is about. Let us start with the fact that this is a bill, in response to a High Court judgement, which this government wants to rush through this place in less than one single day. This bill has got a long progeny. But remember, this is not the first time this government, this Labor government, has fallen foul of the High Court of Australia. Remember the case of *Vanderstock & Anor v The State of Victoria*. That was this Labor government's EV tax – an EV tax which the government was warned was unconstitutional at the time it passed. And then of course it went to the High Court and was found to be unconstitutional and had to be repealed. Once again, Labor got it wrong. Once again, Labor broke the constitution.

Then came the wage theft laws. Labor was told at the time that wage theft laws were unconstitutional because the federal Parliament had already legislated and had covered the field on the issue. But of course this government thought it knew better, and it went and legislated wage theft laws. On the eve of those laws being considered by the High Court, what did the government do? It withdrew every single wage theft charge, withdrew all of them, and then it repealed the wage theft laws. Third time lucky: they got it wrong on the EV tax, they got it wrong on wage theft and they got it wrong on political donations. And having stuffed it up comprehensively, this government now seeks to rush in a 116-page fix with less than one day of debate – one day of debate for something which is so important to get right. We have got to get this one right, and I do not think the government has got it right.

The member for Preston in his contribution talked a lot about the rise of One Nation, and it looks like everything in this bill is governed through a political lens of this government trying to protect itself against the political threat posed by other parties. It is not about integrity in electoral funding. If this was simply about stopping dark money, stopping foreign money, I think there would be unanimous agreement in this place; that is not a problem. This government is trying to rig the playing field to benefit itself: union money, good; everyone else's money, bad. That is what this bill says: union money, good; everyone else's money bad. And to their great discredit, the government has been aided and abetted in this attempt to rush through this dodgy bill by the Greens. Those paragons of integrity in the Victorian Greens are hand in glove with this Labor government in trying to rush dodgy bills through to tilt the playing field in their own favour six months out from an election. It reminds me of an article from 17 March 2023, published in the *Age*, by Broede Carmody, which states:

> Multiple Greens sources, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said while the party wanted Labor to take integrity issues more seriously, MPs were treading carefully because their supporters wouldn't want them to assist in anything that could eventually contribute to the downfall of a left-wing government.

That says it all. The Greens would rather prop up a corrupt Labor government than act with integrity, because when push comes to shove they are more interested in being left wing than they are in being ethical. I will not hear anything from the Greens about ethics when it comes to these matters either.

The government said in its press release from the Premier, issued today, that:

> Labor, the Liberals and the Nationals will each be required to return money transferred to their nominated entities between 1 July 2023 and 14 April 2026 above the general cap of $5,030 …

Of course the High Court judgement, a unanimous judgement, was handed down on 15 April. The government is saying in this bill that any registered entity – which are essentially the registered entities of the Liberals, the Nationals and Labor – needs to return any money they have received in excess of the cap. But why the start date of 1 July 2023? That is not the date of the last state election. Why that date? That is an arbitrary date. Why does that period for which money has to be returned commence on 1 July 2023? There is nothing in the second-reading speech about it. The second-reading speech simply says:

> Additionally, the Bill will require registered political parties to refund to their former nominated entities, before the 28 November 2026, being the date of the next general election, any funds received from their nominated entities between 1 July 2023 and 14 April 2026 that are in excess of the new general cap …

It goes on with no explanation as to why that date was chosen. Do you think that maybe the Labor Party's nominated entity gave the Labor Party a truckload of money just before 1 July 2023 and they do not want to have to hand it back? Maybe that is the reason.

When this government comes in here and talks about ethical, sensible laws, it is a rort. It is a rip-off. I want members opposite to stand up here and put on the record whether their Labor Party's nominated entity made any transfers to the ALP Victorian branch between the date of the last election and 1 July 2023. If the answer is no, then we might start to take them seriously. We might start to listen to what they have to say as though they have a shred of credibility. But I suspect the answer is that none of them are going to stand up and give us that guarantee – not one of them – because this is a rort.

It is a rort designed to benefit the Labor Party at everyone else's expense because they are on the nose. They know it and they want to hamstring their political opponents from making the best possible case for a change of government at this year's state election. That is what this is about. If I am wrong, I challenge Labor members to stand up and give that commitment that no money was transferred between Labor's nominated entity and the Victorian Labor Party in the period between the last state election and 1 July 2023. Otherwise, it looks like the government has picked a date that suits it and not everyone else. I will wait with bated breath to hear whether we hear any such admissions.

I have read the High Court judgement, and the High Court judgement is a very interesting judgement. It talks about differential burdens, and it does that in the context of the established political parties

being able to establish their nominated entities and use previous money for those but new nominated entities not having that ability. What do we say about the differential burden where Labor's nominated entity can shovel money into the ALP and not repay it but other parties cannot do the same thing? That is a differential burden, and the High Court has made it very clear that differential burdens can be an impermissible burden on the freedom of political communication. This is why these laws are dodgy and why they are susceptible to being challenged yet again. This government got it wrong many, many times. It got it wrong on the EV tax – unconstitutional. It got it wrong on wage theft – unconstitutional. It got it wrong on political funding once – unconstitutional. I have no faith that this government will not get it wrong again when it comes to political funding.

Why is it okay for the CFMEU and unions to funnel hundreds of thousands of dollars or millions of dollars into the Labor Party while no-one else has the same opportunity? That is a fair question. I heard the member for Albert Park say that it only goes to administrative purposes. Money is fungible. The more money you get which goes to your administrative causes, the more money that you can obtain from other sources that can go to campaigning. It is no answer at all.

At the end of the day, this bill does a number of things. It puts the law at constitutional risk again, because again it is tilting the playing field in favour of the ALP. It is putting impermissible burdens on other parties. Number two, it is keeping the flow of big union money into the ALP. Number three, it is preventing other parties having access to the same opportunities to raise funds that the Labor Party has through its big union mates. That is what it does. This bill is a rort. If any member of the Labor Party wants to stand up and say, 'Member for Malvern, I can guarantee you not a single cent was given by Labor's associated entity to the Victorian ALP before 1 July 2023,' I will resile from my comments. I wait with bated breath, because that will not be happening. That is not a date plucked out of thin air but a calculated date chosen by this government to benefit them at the expense of other parties. Hand in hand, the Greens have done a deal with Labor to rush these bills through today with no debate. That is why we oppose this dodgy bill.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (15:03): It gives me great pleasure to stand up this afternoon and make a contribution in favour of this legislation. I will pick up some of the comments from previous speakers soon enough, but for those that have not figured it out yet, for the last six or so weeks in Victoria there have been no donation laws. There have been no donation laws in Victoria for the last six weeks, which obviously plays a role in harming the integrity of the political system in Victoria and most certainly the donation system. We have heard members opposite during their contributions question why this is so urgent, why we have to do it today and why we have to have speedy passage of this bill. I would have thought that it is pretty self-explanatory. I would have thought it is pretty self-explanatory that once we have landed on a position that is rock solid, has integrity and is transparent we get this bill through the Parliament as quickly as possible to eliminate the risk that exists right now of dark money coming into Victoria's political system, perhaps from overseas, perhaps from elsewhere and perhaps in enormous quantities.

It is incredibly important that we pass this legislation this week so we have a system in Victoria which will hold up to a High Court challenge and which makes sure that there is a fair playing field in the Victorian political system when it comes to donations, because we know what happens when there is not: huge amounts of money from corporations and from other places, from overseas, come into Victoria's political system, and they have undue influence on elections. I cannot remember exactly who it was earlier today who said – I think it was the member for Gippsland South – 'No-one has been talking about the fact that we should have caps. Why should you have caps?' Everyone is talking about the fact that we should have caps – everyone. There is political discourse all over the country about donation laws in different political systems. I have listened intently to previous contributions from those opposite, and one after another from that clown show opposite have come into this place and sought to conflate issues.

A member interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: Yes, I am half on your side, because we won 56 seats a few years ago, guys. There is a reason some of us are over here. They have sought to conflate issues and drum up fear –

A member interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: Keep it down. They cannot lie straight in bed. They come in here and conflate the issue of union affiliation with the Labor Party like it has something to do with this. You cannot use it to campaign, guys. They are separate accounts. They do so whilst holding $130 million in Cormack. How can you look at us with a straight face and conflate those issues?

Furthermore, we know how these negotiations went. All of us do. All of us on this side understand how these negotiations went, and everyone on that side understands it too. Everyone in this place understands how this went. It was intensive consultation with the opposition, particularly at the outset, to try and land an arrangement that we could get through the Parliament in a bipartisan manner. But we could not do so, firstly, because the member for Brighton thought that he ran the show. He could not get to the same position as the party office and could not get to the same position as the Leader of the Opposition. I would have thought, given I am pretty sure the Premier's office has carriage of this bill, it would have been most appropriate that the Leader of the Opposition's office had carriage of this bill for the other side. But the member for Brighton, to be fair, is the smartest guy in the room, so he insisted that we consult only with him. We were unable to land a position at the outset because of the retrospective nature of the legislation and the transparent nature of the legislation.

I do not want to accuse the opposition or the Liberal Party of anything – the member for Nepean is not here anymore – but I do note that there was one particular event during the last six weeks where perhaps a sizeable sum of money may have been invested into a certain by-election. I am only spitballing here.

Wayne Farnham interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: Werribee happened in February, you goose. It was covered by the former donation laws, you clown. I do not want to accuse anyone of anything, but there was that significant event in the last six weeks or so where maybe there was a whole bunch of money put into it that maybe was over any donation cap that the state has ever had – maybe, just maybe. Also, there was a significant issue around what the donation cap may be. I know the Liberal Party were pretty keen on $50,000. I am not sure what the point of having a donation cap would be at that point, but that was a real point of contention from the outset as well. There was also the issue of the nominated entities. I am not a lawyer or a former lawyer, member for Malvern, but I would have thought if the High Court decision said anything it was that nominated entities are done. They are done.

It was the Liberal Party's position that maybe they could get their way through this while still being able to use these nominated entities, perhaps because they have got $130 million in theirs. I am not sure, but perhaps that had something to do with it. I mean, anyone with half a brain would have thought that absolutely had something to do with it. To come in here and to conflate issues of integrity, to try and drop the union movement in it, because they just love doing that – we can have a bingo card for how many times they say 'CFMEU'. The CFMEU are not even affiliated to the party anymore, so I am not quite sure what they have got to do with it. I would have thought that we were talking about donation legislation from when the High Court made its decision, and I am pretty sure that the CFMEU are no longer affiliated to the party, member for Malvern.

They cannot lie straight in bed. To come in here, to conflate those issues, to talk about integrity – all that has happened is they have chucked their toys out of the cot because they did not get their way. That is all. They have chucked their toys out of the cot because they did not get their way, and then they come in here, they conflate all of the issues and they talk absolute drivel until someone pulls them up. The members on this side have been pretty good at pulling them up, because, to be frank, it has been a pretty transparent process with our caucus, and our caucus understands how these negotiations went. When the member for Brighton talks out both sides of his mouth, context is important.

Contextualisation may not be his strong suit, but to come in here and conflate all of these issues and try and deal with this in this way I think is disingenuous, but it is also kind of dangerous.

These laws are incredibly important to the integrity of Victoria's political system and to the integrity of our elections here in Victoria. That is why they existed in the first place. We were all a bit surprised by the High Court decision, but we are now moving through this with goodwill, unfortunately not with the Liberal Party or the opposition, but with the crossbench and the Greens. We are all moving through this with goodwill to make sure the integrity of our elections here in Victoria is as strong as it can possibly be.

Just to go to the legislation for a moment before I finish my contribution, the few changes included in the bill – the political donation cap I believe prior to the High Court decision was slightly under $5000. It will now be $7500. That is a slight increase – nothing as ridiculous as $50,000, but a slight increase. A ban on all foreign donations is one of the most important aspects of the bill, and frankly one of the most problematic reasons for the Liberal Party to be opposing it and not want to give it a speedy passage. Do not look at me like that, member for Narracan; you know what is going on. And a ban on anonymous donations at or above $1250 – so if you make a donation over $1250, you have to declare it, which is incredibly important. It will also improve enforcement and compliance mechanisms.

I reiterate that there are no donation laws in Victoria right now, which could cause foreign interference and which could cause the integrity of our elections to be called into question. It is deeply irresponsible for the opposition to not be supporting this bill. I commend it to the house.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (15:13): I am pleased to rise on the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026. It is always interesting to follow the member for Tarneit, having listened to the absolute drivel that comes out of his mouth. We have to ask why we are here today discussing this bill, and the reason why we are here today, quite frankly, is because the government stuffed it up. That is it. The legislation got challenged in the High Court, and that is why we are here today. The member for Malvern stated earlier that it is not the first time the government has stuffed up a bill in this place that has been challenged in the High Court and been overturned. That is why we are here today doing a donations bill, because of the government's incompetence in doing it in the first place. I have heard so many members today talk about integrity. They have talked about due process. They have talked about a range of issues. You would think they were the high and mighty of integrity in this state, yet Victoria knows a lot better. But the fact of the matter is that this bill has been handed to us in the last few hours.

We have had no time. They may say, 'Oh, oh, oh,' but the fact of the matter is that side of the house keep telling us how important this legislation is yet give this side of the house no chance to scrutinise it, not even a bill briefing, which is a pretty standard practice – a bill briefing where we cannot ask questions. To be honest, this bill should go to consideration in detail. If it is what that side says it is, if it is so important that we get this through, be transparent about it. But it is typical of that side. They do not like being transparent. They do not like it. They are trying to jam this legislation through today with no scrutiny from anyone. This is what amuses me: the government is asking us to have the faith in them that they have got this bill right when the previous donation bill just got thrown out of the High Court. We are not going to play that game with this government, because we know they continually stuff things up. Now we have got to take their word for it that when this goes through it will not be challenged and it is all constitutional. But I think the Premier herself has said she expects these laws to be challenged. Why? Are they wrong already? It is a fair question. If the Premier has already stated that she thinks these laws will be challenged, are they already wrong? It is a problem if at the moment we actually have no electoral laws in this state because the government stuffed things up, and that is why we are here today, through their incompetence.

I heard the member for Tarneit, and he has run out of the chamber now. He always does that when he knows he is about to get towelled up – he scuttles out of the chamber. He does not want to stand here. But let us talk about how the government is really setting this up. They are really setting this up six months out from the election, as the member for Malvern stated earlier, to hamper all their political

opponents. There was $1.5 million from the CFMEU last year – $1.5 million from a union that is in administration. Talk about lying down with people – this government are just so blatant about it now, they do not even worry about it. They just blatantly lie down with the CFMEU, even though they are in administration at the moment. We know what CFMEU stands for: crime, fraud, misogynistic, extortion, union. That is what it means. That is what they are. But the government still wants to be in bed with them. It is unbelievable. As I say, you lie down with dogs, you get fleas. And I tell you what, there are a lot of members on that side of the chamber that should be really, really itchy right now. I really think they will be, because come this election on 28 November there are going to be a lot of the members over that side that will not be –

Mathew Hilakari interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: Member for Point Cook, I will be happy to wave goodbye to you come 28 November. Do not worry, because I think your seat is one of the seats that will be in trouble and you probably will not be here; neither will the member for Narre Warren North. She will probably be gone as well. This is what they are trying to do now – they are trying to rig the election. That is what they want to do. They want to rig the election to try and win again. They are trying to hold on. And this is why they have done the laws they have, and this is why they are trying to jam this through Parliament in one day with no-one to have a say in it. So do not sit up there and be all pious like you are the most honest people in Victoria, because Victorians know you are not. They know that through your behaviour. We will talk about that later on today, I imagine. But yes, we are opposing this for a number of reasons, because you are trying to stitch up the opposition. That is all you are trying to do. This bill has been manipulated by this government to stack the cards in their favour.

That is exactly what is happening here today. The High Court threw it out the first time because the government got it wrong, like they threw out the EVs bill and like they threw out the wage theft bills. The government continually gets bills wrong. They continually get challenged and they continually get thrown out. Is this bill constitutional? Do we take the government's word for it – that they got it wrong the first time around? To be honest, how are we meant to know if it is constitutional? When the Premier says she expects it to be challenged, she probably realises that it is not constitutional. So why go through with it? Why not go through the proper process? Why not give us time to look at the bill properly? Why not give us a bill briefing, and why not do consideration in detail? I have said this before about the member for Essendon. When he thought a bill was very, very important – it was a WorkCover bill – that minister sat in that chair and did consideration in detail himself. He backed himself because he knew the importance of the bill. Why isn't the relevant minister doing the same on this bill? Why aren't they doing it, if it is that important? Because they are scared of the questions that we are going to ask. It is really that simple.

To be honest, the fact they just want to go back to 1 July 2023 does raise some serious questions. Why are they picking that date? I do not know. Whose idea was that? I mean, the member for Tarneit just thinks he was involved in everything. He knows everything, and he talks himself up a fair bit, the member for Tarneit. But again, he just makes it up as he goes along. He just makes stuff up. As I said, it is important that we have donation laws in Victoria; we do not want to see foreign donations capitalise or influence any political party in this state. I firmly agree with that. Why can't we have the time to debate this bill properly? You cannot jam a bill through like this and expect everyone to agree. You just cannot. That is a ridiculous notion. Just the fact that we get a few hours notice really is snubbing your nose at the conventions of this Parliament and at the people of Victoria. That is what you are doing.

All that you have managed to do is continue to get donations from union affiliates. That is what this bill has done, and that is why we oppose this bill, because it is not a level playing field. It got thrown out the first time by the High Court because it was not a level playing field. Yet the government has just reintroduced another bill that is not a level playing field. That is exactly what they have done, and that is the reason why we oppose it. That, and the fact we have had no consultation at all, just shows you how low this government will go to win an election. They are hanging on for grim death, and that

is the problem. Everyone over there is hanging on for grim death. There are at least 20 members over there that are wondering, 'Are we going to be here after 28 November?' They are. I will be here. I will guarantee I will be here. But there are a lot over there that will not be here. They will not. Point Cook probably will not be here, and I will not miss him one bit.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (15:23): I will come to the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026 in a moment, but I want to just reflect upon the really disconcerting contributions by a number of those opposite who have conflated a legitimate electoral contest with this bill to suggest – in the words that the member for Caulfield used in his speech and the words of the member for Narracan – that the intention of this bill is to rig an election, that it is inherently corrupt. It is incredibly dangerous. It is so toxic. It is a form of destructive populism, the consequences of which will be visited upon them, because of the delegitimisation that that kind of populist nonsense has upon the whole system. It undermines people's confidence in democratic norms and democratic institutions, and it is seats like Shepparton, seats like Narracan and seats like Gippsland South which will be vulnerable to a right-wing fringe party as a consequence of trust in the entire system breaking down. There will be an election in November. Every single person in this house will be up for election, and that is right and proper, as it should be.

It is also entirely true to say there are no campaign financing laws in place in Victoria at the moment. So it is far too rich for those opposite to say that they want to have a prohibition on foreign donations while at the same time not engaging in the debate properly in this place. Rather they suggest that an attempt to introduce sensible reforms around campaign financing is somehow a manifestation of corruption and an attempt to rig an election. I cannot state more strongly how destructive that is for people's confidence in democracy. It is astonishingly short-termist from those opposite. As I say, the consequences of that short-termism will be visited upon them because of the collapse in their primary vote.

Wayne Farnham interjected.

Iwan WALTERS: We will see what happens, member for Narracan. Coming back to the premise of the bill, what happened on 15 April was that part 12 of the Electoral Act 2002 was effectively struck out in its entirety. It could not be finessed. It requires a fundamental overhaul of the electoral financing arrangements in Victoria. The Premier, upon the High Court handing down that decision, very clearly foreshadowed that there would be legislative action to retrospectively address the gap that now does exist that means there is no prohibition on any foreign actor spending money on or donating money to a Victorian political candidate, in effect trying to buy an election. We have heard from the director-general of ASIO and others about how foreign interference in Australia by malign actors – both state and non-state actors – is very real. To have a situation whereby there is no prohibition whatsoever, in effect, on somebody outside of this country donating money, seeking to buy an election, palpably seeking to have an undue influence and to interfere in democratic processes in Australia and Victoria, as the case might be in this instance, is incredibly dangerous. It is why there is an urgency to this bill.

I come back to the member for Narracan, who has just left the chamber. His suggestion that the urgency and the expedited timelines in this place somehow denoted an absence of consultation and an absence of the capacity of those opposite to scrutinise this bill is an absolute furphy. There has been extensive consultation between the political parties at a secretariat level and at a political level in this place, including the opposition parties – both the Nationals and the Liberals. To suggest that there has not been that opportunity to fully scrutinise, to ask the questions that they are suggesting they do not have time to ask in this place, is just simply untrue, and it does them a disservice. Fundamentally again it is seeking to obfuscate and to dissemble.

The core premise is that as of 15 April we do not have electoral financing laws in place in this state. There is inherently an urgency to bring them in to ensure that Victorians can have confidence in the entire architecture, because in their absence we have no way of knowing who is donating money to political campaigns, how much money they are donating to political campaigns, the provenance of

that money and the geographic origins of the people who are making those donations. That is surely an absurdity. Those opposite know that, and yet instead, rather than grappling with the fundamental need to have reform, they conflate issues. They suggest that somehow it is an attempt to buy an election – an attempt by one party or another to have an undue influence. They suggest that it is a manifestation of corruption and of trying to rig an election. The member for Caulfield set that tone in his contribution. I thought it was astonishingly intemperate, and I think it is actively destructive not just for his own party and his coalition partners but for the trust that Victorians have in democratic institutions. We have seen it before in other jurisdictions. It does not end well for parties in the mainstream when that sort of rhetoric is used and when those sorts of images are put around to suggest that there are malign actors who are in power seeking to nobble ordinary people and to control the system to suit their own ends. It is not true, but that does not mean that people will not believe it. It is toxic, it is corrosive and it undermines the democratic fabric that we have.

The member for Preston in his really eloquent and informed contribution, born of his deep experience with these matters, did make the point – and I think it is worth dwelling upon – that part of the reason why the original 2018, I think, laws were struck out is that they were seeking to grapple with the challenge that the Cormack Foundation is not entirely governed by the Liberal Party; it is semi-independent of it. The political parties themselves do not fit neatly into the structures that legislation in Australia has for organisations, whether that is incorporated associations or corporations.

I think the member for Preston made a really compelling point: the federal government, the Special Minister of State and others with responsibility for these issues should seek to develop a mechanism that captures the complexities of political parties, which are entirely legitimate and also essential pillars of our political processes. Political parties are not nefarious actors, they are entities that enable people of like mind and shared values to come together to seek to advocate for particular causes, changes and reforms in our society. Then we come to this place and we have a debate. We have a debate about those things in a democratic way that means that we do not have violence on the streets and that we do not have strongman politics where power and might are right. We may not have consensus on every issue or agreement on every issue, but we have democratic processes that enable us to resolve tensions between competing rights and divergent perspectives on issues. Political parties are an incredibly important part of that process, so I think it is incumbent upon governments, the federal government in this case, to think about how to properly ensure that the nature of a political party is reflected in law, so that we do not have this scenario where there is an attempt to retrospectively fit onto the realities of political party governance structures, campaign financing laws that the High Court self-evidently on 15 April deemed were unconstitutional.

The member for Gippsland South also made the point that, in a sense, the judgement of the High Court, without reflecting upon it in any pejorative way, has the effect of penalising political parties which have been in existence for a long period of time. The Nationals and their precursor the Country Party have been in existence for 110 years, the Labor Party for well over 120 years and the Liberal Party for over 80 years, and during that period of time they have husbanded resources and the donations of loyal members to create the mechanisms whereby they can fund campaigns. Because of the High Court's decision, they are limited therefore in their capacity to use the donations that people have very legitimately given to them.

As I said, there is a profound importance of democratic institutions and transparent donation laws to our economy and to our society. One of the astonishing strengths that Australia has, and Victoria has, on a global scale is low sovereign risk. Investors have confidence in the political system, the political structures and the democratic institutions that provide security to market actors. One of the dimensions of that that is so important is free and fair elections where foreign investors, or anybody for that matter, can have confidence that elections are not going to be bought and that elections are not subject to nefarious activities of foreign actors who may have malign interests. Things like a robust and independent Australian Electoral Commission, things like the Victorian Electoral Commission and things like the absence of gerrymandered electoral boundaries where there is a genuine contest in every

seat, are important, so too are campaign financing laws that ensure that Victorians can have confidence that people are not seeking to buy an election, where there are caps in place, and there is clarity over who is making a donation, where they are coming from and what that money is being used for. That is why there is an urgency to this legislation, because at the moment there are no laws in place to prevent that sort of malign activity. I commend this bill to the house. I hope that it is able to be sent upstairs for further scrutiny and for further debate and that we have laws in place.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:33): I cannot believe that this Labor government continues to believe its own rubbish. This is a bill that is nothing more than a shameful attempt by the Labor Party to rig the system. That is what it is for – to rig the system. Let us call it what it is.

Iwan Walters interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: You have had your go. This government have done everything they possibly can. We know that the popularity of the Allan Labor government has fallen through the floor. When we see the Premier doorknocking in her own seat in a desperate move to try and win votes, we know that the government will now do anything they possibly can to ensure that they win the election in November – anything. This is a classic example. You see, what we have had are election laws in this state that were challenged at the High Court constitutionally and thrown out by the High Court constitutionally. A law that was implemented in 2018 has been thrown out.

The government is having a second go, but we need to understand why they are having a second go and what the difference is. There is one consistency in this when it comes to corruption. Let me spell it out for you: there is one consistency, and that is the CFMEU. The CFMEU has stolen $15 billion of taxpayer money. The same CFMEU donated $1.5 million to the Labor Party in the last term and half a million dollars in this term, and the laws that we are debating today enable the CFMEU to continue to donate to the Labor Party. Every other entity is off limits, but the CFMEU and their union mates can continue to donate to the Labor Party to ensure that they have rivers of gold going into the election and save all the marginal seats, including you, Tarneit – to save your skin, to save Werribee, to save Point Cook, to save all of you. This government are scared because they know they are going to lose their seats without the rivers of gold from their union mates and from the CFMEU.

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, members should use correct titles rather than 'you' and talk about the actions of the Chair.

David SOUTHWICK: It is not a point of order. Again we can see the member for Point Cook –

Mathew Hilakari: We need to use correct titles, and we should not reflect on the Chair in this chamber.

David SOUTHWICK: The member for Point Cook has had his turn, and the member for Point Cook needs to understand –

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I am waiting for a ruling on that point.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Kim O'Keeffe): Could you please call members by their name, member for Caulfield.

David SOUTHWICK: The member for Point Cook is very nervous at the moment because the member for Point Cook is in one of the seats that Paul Hopper and the West Party are coming after and we are absolutely coming after. It is one of my favourite seats. I have been to Point Cook many, many times. The member for Point Cook knows very, very well that Point Cook and 11 other seats in the west are all under severe threat, and that is why the seats in the west and these marginal seats are all absolutely scared of what is coming and will do anything they possibly can. That is why we have this dodgy bill to give dodgy money to protect these seats – a protection racket for the likes of Point Cook, a protection racket for the likes of Narre Warren and Tarneit, who is out of his seat.

Members interjecting.

David SOUTHWICK: The member for Tarneit, the member for Werribee, the member for Narre Warren – let us keep going – the members for Footscray, Laverton, Niddrie, Williamstown, St Albans, Sunbury, Sydenham, Tarneit –

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Kim O'Keeffe): Order! I am on my feet, member for Caulfield. I cannot hear the member on their feet. Continue, thank you, member for Caulfield.

David SOUTHWICK: Thank you, Acting Speaker. Again, the reason why these members of the Allan Labor government and the Labor Party are up and about at the moment is because they know that they are at real threat of losing their seats. That is why we have a rushed bill that has come before the Parliament today to ride roughshod over Victorians and ensure that Victorians do not get a proper say in what is going on, to ensure that, even though these laws were thrown out the first time by the High Court, they can have another go. We know that the West Party, which is coming after Point Cook, is already challenging these laws in the High Court, before they have even passed today. We know that because the government have not done their homework. They are trying to rush these laws through with the real issue of not getting these laws done properly.

We all want fair laws. We do not want foreign donations, we want transparency, but we also want to ensure that the Labor Party and their CFMEU mates abide by the same transparency. It should be a law for everybody, including the union movement. We cannot have the union movement shovelling money into the Labor Party like there is no tomorrow to run a protection racket for their Labor mates. There are at least 20 seats the Labor Party are at risk of losing as a result of a government that has not been listening to Victorians since they were elected. They have failed to listen, and this is another example. They are not listening again. The government is not listening to the High Court ruling. The government fail to listen to anybody and will do anything, including dirty, dodgy deals, to get themselves elected. That is why the rules should apply to everybody, including the Labor Party and including the CFMEU.

There is one thing that all Victorians know, and that is that there has been $15 billion of CFMEU corruption on the Labor Party's big, rotten, dirty build. Every major transport project in Victoria has been corrupted by the CFMEU, and the government and the leader, the Premier, have allowed this to happen. Mick Gatto was arrested today. He has been running the protection racket on half of these sites. Again, this was allowed to happen under Labor's watch. The same union have shovelled $1.5 million of donation money into the Labor government, with another half a million this year – $2 million – and they want to keep shovelling money in to try and ensure they are elected again, because the one thing that we will do is run a royal commission to make sure we clean up the state and clean up the corruption. That is the fear that every Labor member, Labor minister and Premier has: that we will finally get to the bottom of the corruption and we will lock up those that have been caught up in this dirty, rotten corruption that has ripped off every single taxpayer in Victoria. That is what every Victorian taxpayer expects.

This is why this bill is so important. This is why it is so important to get things right. This is why it is important to have transparent donation laws that are fair for everybody – a law that fits for everybody. You cannot say on one hand that you can have no donations coming from one group and one side of politics but open the floodgates when it comes to the union movement, because we know that is an unfair advantage. Many in the Labor Party today have spoken about how they have got to make sure that there is transparency and to not scare people. Well, yes, Victorians are scared. If only I had a dollar for every Victorian that said if Labor win the election again this year, they will be moving elsewhere because they have had a gutful of this government. They have had a gutful of a deceitful, hurtful, spiteful government that does everything it possibly can to drive Victoria into the ground. They do not want another four years. And when this desperate government, this doorknocking Premier in her own electorate, goes out there and says, 'You know what, we'll have another crack to ensure we run a

donation deal that just favours the unions to the Labor Party,' well, that is not fair, that is not right and that is what we stand against.

That is why we will not be supporting this bill. We will not allow the unions to run this state. We will not allow the CFMEU to get away with what they have been getting away with since the Big Build started. Every time the Premier has put on a hard hat and cut a ribbon on the Big Build she has pretty much also given a pat on the back to the CFMEU and the movement that stood by her. The government have done nothing to shut this down, and now they want to continue to take donations from the unions to get themselves re-elected. This government will do anything and say anything to get re-elected. That is why this bill is not fair. 120 pages were delivered today to be passed today – no proper consultation and no proper debate. They want to silence us, they want to shut us down and they do not want Victorians to have their say. Victorians will have their say on 28 November. It does not matter how much corrupt money the Labor Party takes from the unions; Victorians will throw the Labor government out because it is a corrupt government that has not been listening to Victorians and has taken Victorians for a ride. Victorians once and for all have had a gutful of this shameful and hurtful government.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (15:43): Goodness me, if you ever, as a union person, want to know how much those opposite hate working people, just listen to that last bit and how the member for Caulfield talks about unions generally – unions in our state, people who build our state, people who are in the teachers union or the nurses union, unions that are contributing with compassion to the care of Victorians each and every day. Imagine if you were a teacher in the AEU today: you have just been described as corrupt, as a thug, as all these other synonyms that come to mind. And the irony of it all is to sit in here, with a former Leader of the Liberal Party behind you, talking about criminals and corruption when nine years ago old mate over there sat down for lobster with the alleged head of organised crime. Remember that?

Matthew Guy interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: We were all here, mate. We were all here during your era. Glass jaw over there, he will go for a few laps around the bowling green.

Daniela De Martino: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, there was unparliamentary language from the member who just left the chamber.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Kim O'Keeffe): He has left the chamber.

David Southwick: On a further point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is using incorrect titles when they are calling out members on this side. I ask the member to use proper titles when they are referring to other members.

Tim RICHARDSON: For the removal of all doubt, I will refer to the member for Bullen, who sat down with figures from the underworld in what was one of the most egregious actions we have ever seen in Victoria, which was the scandal of the 2018 election – for those opposite, who are so pure in describing themselves as the keepers of standards here on behaviour and conduct – which absolutely destroyed his quest for the premiership in 2018.

What was part of the reasons we found donation thresholds at such low limits? What was it? What were some of the reasons? That was one of them. That was one of the reasons that were put forward. The irony of the member for Caulfield in full flight to make those points while the member for Bulleen sits on is like one of the most twisted senses of irony I have ever seen. Some of us were here in the class of 2014 and saw exactly how outrageous that was. Who just goes to the Lobster Cave and sits down for a dinner with alleged underworld figures? Nick McKenzie's brilliant report uncovered it all. That is exactly the reason we need to defend. That is why we need public funding disclosure, that is why we need real-time disclosure and that is why we need to see dark elements in political donations

brought into the light, because those types of characters would not find themselves donating ever to political movements if it was public.

At that time the thresholds were up near $10,000 and you could get – this was in Nick McKenzie's report – 25 people, 10 grand a head, 'There you go!' That was 250K that was never seen. That was the hope that night. We all knew it. Someone in the Liberal Party was good enough to step up and whistleblow to the media. Someone was good enough to say, 'You know what, that's a bit too far for us.' It became an enormous scandal, Acting Speaker O'Keeffe. I know you were not here at the time, but goodness me, you could not walk anywhere without seeing someone dressed up as a lobster chasing the member for Bulleen around. It required a whistleblower. It required someone within the Liberal Party to have a conscience to bring out what was going to be a horrific breach of confidence and trust of alleged underworld figures donating directly to the Liberal Party for their political aspirations.

Those opposite cannot come in here with purity and say, 'We're all great, and we've got nothing wrong in our show,' even though the member for Brighton, who knows intimately some of the negotiations that were done on this, did not in the first instance want retrospectivity, because it was a Hunger Games out in Nepean, and they were absolutely concerned whether the new member for Nepean would get up or not, and there is a grey area to that right now. This will be retrospective. Guess what, they have to either front up who was funding during that time, what they took in during that time and explain that, or hope that they are below the thresholds of those limits, because it will all come out. If they do not do it properly, there will be offences under these reforms and under this act.

The member for Brighton made some comments around the people he has been negotiating with, being 15th-tier advisers. Maybe that is more of a reflection on where we see him in the rankings and who he actually had to talk to. Maybe they got a bit too cute here. Maybe they thought they had all the answers and rather than negotiating in good faith there was pressure borne from their regional seats being under huge amounts of pressure from One Nation, who do not have a state leader from what I can see. They do not have any sort of political presence in Victoria at the moment, and there is huge anxiety around what One Nation will bring to the Liberal Party. Federally we see a political movement that in its populist nature, like we see with Reform in the UK, is tearing to pieces our democracy, our Westminster system, and saying all kinds of stuff.

If you want to go back and see an eloquent description of where we are at and the state of play, the member for Preston – who has an incredible knowledge of this space and a passion for electoral reform, having served at some of the most senior levels in a political administration and in departments – summed it up impeccably. It is a moment in time. There should be more coverage of the way that he described it. The way he eloquently articulated it is a warning sign that some of us have tried to say over and over and over. The two-party system, the multiparty system now with the Greens political party, is a stable structure in Victoria. If we chew away at the fringes and we are in a populist frame, rather than doing the hard stuff of governing, we all suffer that consequence. Member for Melbourne, I am giving you a bit of a lift-up here.

Ellen Sandell interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: It was a compliment, yes, member for Melbourne. For the record, which will probably come back to haunt me, it was a compliment, member for Melbourne. I think they are well established in discourse nationally and in Victoria, as is the coalition and Nationals, as is the Australian Labor Party. But some of the consequences of things outside of our periphery, what we see in the US, the UK, Europe and other jurisdictions, and where we find ourselves a little bit behind that cycle but with it roaring up on us, is a warning to all of us that we need to really lift the standards of discourse and do the hard things that governments and oppositions need to do, because there is always someone who is going to be more populist; there is always someone who is going to take a further step or be more outrageous or more offensive. It is in human nature. It is in the psyche of us, in our disposition as people. So we need to think about the standards that we set and the standards that we

lift in this place and in this engagement, and political donations are a really large part of that. A really large part of that public funding is about bringing that trust and confidence. We do not see that in other jurisdictions – where the Malinauskas government has gone, we see almost no donation frame to that. We still think there is a place where people can participate in that engagement and that democratic element. We see spending caps in Queensland. That is a way that they have looked at per-seat expenditure. We have got here public funding that supports the administration so there is not a risk of then further undermining and corruption into the future as well, and so that new entrants, whoever they might be, have an ability to fundraise in that environment, and that is disproportionate to other members of Parliament who would be fundraising in their own right as well.

These were time-sensitive and urgent pieces of legislation. You think of some of the work that we are doing and will come in the response around IBAC. How many moments in time would there be of grey corruption and of risk if we have just no elements of protection whatsoever over some of the donations? What would it look like? It would be an atrocious system that we would find ourselves in. The characterisations from those opposite around where these electoral reforms are, they were literally tinkering around the edges even last night of where this might be. The grandeur and all the dramatics here, they were close to landing with us, so let us just remind those opposite there. The member for Brighton can do the theatrics, but the member for Brighton was in those discussions up to last night, going through and negotiating and discussing. So all the theatre here – we are talking degrees of separation here. The member for Caulfield is having a crack at where this comes to be. Just remember the negotiations that their party administration office has been engaged in with the Nationals, the Greens political party, the ALP and other entrants and the crossbench. This has all been free flowing in that engagement.

Finally, because this place is just humorous and on many occasions has twisted irony, at least ask the member for Bulleen to step out when the member for Caulfield is in full flight about standards and criminality on donations, when old mate over there – Bulleen – was literally one of the big reasons we have this right now today.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:54): I rise to speak on the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026, and from the outset I would like to be very clear why we are all here, because this is a mess that Victoria finds itself in today, and it is entirely of the making of the state Labor government. In 2018 the Labor government carefully and deliberately passed laws that included massive loopholes to allow the Labor, Liberal and National parties to keep their political slush funds, while at the same time denying this to other political parties and candidates. In doing so, they created laws that were not only undemocratic, cynical and downright dodgy, but also, as it turns out, not permitted under the Australian constitution, funnily enough. In his speech earlier the member for Preston seemed to try and defend this by saying that nominated entities were totally legit, and my question to him, then, is this: if they were legit, why did the legislation specifically prohibit anybody else – any other candidate or party – from setting up a nominated entity and being exempt from the donations laws?

The Greens did not want one because we felt it was entirely undemocratic and dodgy, but the reason the Labor government prevented other parties from doing it is because it was rigged from the start, and the Labor Party knew it. It was rigged in favour of the Labor, Liberal and Nationals major parties, and now the High Court has found that it is unconstitutional. In finding the 2018 laws to be unconstitutional, the High Court immediately struck out the entire part of the Electoral Act 2002 that dealt not only with these nominated entity slush funds but also all the donation laws and requirements to do with electoral funding in Victoria. All of a sudden Victoria had no political financing, donation or electoral laws at all. Incredibly, this has been the case now for several months, and indeed it is still the case as I speak right now.

The Greens felt that it was untenable to allow a situation to continue where dark money – hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars – is potentially flowing from billionaires, corporations, vested interests and even overseas actors to influence the outcome of the Victorian election this November. There is clearly a need to address it and address it quickly and to also claw back the hundreds and

thousands, perhaps more, in secret donations and transfers from those political slush funds that have flowed into political parties since the High Court's ruling. But let us be clear: this is a temporary fix because Labor would not do a proper rewrite of the laws in the time that they had, and that is why having a review of the laws baked into the legislation is critical.

The temporary fix in the bill includes some important things. Firstly, it provides that the three nominated entities – the political slush funds that I mentioned that were exclusively made available to the Labor, Liberal and Nationals parties – will now be subject to a donations cap just like everyone else. They cannot donate more than $7500 to the political party that they are affiliated with. They will not be allowed to keep donating unlimited amounts. The bill reinstates a cap on donations and sets it at $7500. Donation caps are essential for our democracy, to stop wealthy individuals and corporations being able to exert undue power and control over our politics and elections at the expense, I must say, of ordinary Victorians who do not have the same wealth and power. Ordinary citizens are the ones who should ultimately determine the outcome of elections, through their vote. This is why the Greens support donation caps being set as low as is possible and as low as is constitutional. Now, $7500 is a little bit higher than it was previously – it was set at $4700 – but it is much less than what others had proposed, and it is better for democracy and better for keeping big money out of politics.

Everyone will be subject to this cap; no-one is exempt. If Labor take donations from unions, they cannot use them for state election campaigning if they are above this cap amount. If the Liberal Party takes donations from their investment fund or a wealthy corporation who wants to influence their policies, they can only take a donation below $7500 if they want to use it for state election campaigning. This is a fundamental –

A member interjected.

Ellen SANDELL: If a climate activist wants to make a donation, they are subject to the exact same cap – $7500. It is a fundamental principle of democracy that everyone has the same donation cap rules, which is what this legislation does.

The bill will also reinstate public funding for elections. Public funding has long been an important feature of our democracy to ensure that ordinary voters determine who receives electoral funding based on the level of support they receive from a voting population and that it is not simply one or two vested billionaire or corporate interests that fund elections. Public funding allows us to get vested interest money out of elections. It allows for fair elections as everyone gets public funding if they run for election and they receive more than 4 per cent of the vote.

This bill also proposes to double the donation cap for new entrants and candidates running in elections for the first time, to $15,000 per donation. The higher donation cap acknowledges that in an open democracy it is important not only that all eligible people are allowed to put up their hand to run as candidates in elections but also that there should not be unreasonable or insurmountable barriers for them to do that. Further, the higher cap recognises that incumbents have some inherent advantages simply by virtue of being incumbents, and there is a need to level the playing field and give new entrants a leg-up to be able to start a campaign in the first place before they receive their public funding.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Grievance debate

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That grievances be noted.

Political donations

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (16:01): Well, that is a great motion to move – and what an afternoon to rise to speak in this place about the ongoing corruption. We have heard this afternoon about this government's attempt to ram through a piece of legislation that was waved in front of this

Parliament at 11 o'clock this morning. It is now 4 o'clock, and within a matter of hours this government plans to pass that through this chamber. It is about the future of democracy in this state, and it is a future that this government is backing on to make sure that it can do its darnedest to win the next election by absolutely undercutting any forms of opposition in the state.

The corruption in this state of Victoria today, it is grey, it is white, it is corruption-corruption, it is black corruption, it is red corruption, it is every type of corruption, and unfortunately it permeates so many elements of Victorians' lives. We have heard a lot in recent months about Big Build corruption, and that is the most visible form of corruption that we see in this state. But to think that at a time when the community is genuinely interested to know how this government deals with corruption, how it deals with dishonesty, how it deals with probity, this government seeks to rush through a piece of legislation about donations for election funding in a matter of hours in this Parliament. This is a problem that the government was well aware of for a very long time. It lost in the High Court back in April; it has had since then to work constructively with all sides of Parliament to make a fair piece of legislation that could hold us in good stead. But despite being thrown out in the High Court only a matter of months ago, it is prepared to rush through a piece of legislation that smells so bad that it is at risk of being thrown out of the High Court again in coming months by the same people that challenged it the first time, and they will probably have a few extras joining them in the pursuit of having this government see reason on what is fair for the democracy of this wonderful state.

If I can highlight just a couple of points that really smell about this piece of legislation – this piece of legislation that all Victorians should be worried about – what it does is it caps donations. Well, that is not a bad thing. Most people probably see reason as to why we should limit the amount of influence someone can have; no-one disputes that very much. But what we find intolerable is that while everybody else is limited in where they can get their funds and how they can get them, the one party in the chamber – and maybe another one, but one in particular – who at the base of its criticism at the moment is the way it has allowed unions to run rampant in this state, allegedly fleecing up to $15 billion from taxpayers, has now left a loophole that they can continue to receive funds from those same organisations that they are actively turning a blind eye to in corruption. Now, that makes no sense to anybody. It is unfair, it is unjust but worst of all it is undemocratic. And not only that, it continues to create a terrible miasma of corruption – a fume, a smell of corruption – that will infiltrate every piece of activity and thinking in this state. For the government of the day, for this Labor government, not to see the problem with a situation where their friends in the union movement can continue to funnel funds to them, funds that we know are in part topped up by theft and corruption and poor dealings on out-of-control Big Build sites around Victoria, is a disgrace. It is something that Victorians will not stand for. Not only that, it belittles the fine democracy that we should all be proud of here in the state of Victoria.

This afternoon I also want to touch on the Big Build corruption in its many forms. One of the disappointing things all Victorians have witnessed in recent months is a Premier and senior ministers who continually say there is nothing they can do about it. They continually say that. We heard last week in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) hearings from a Premier who said it is not her responsibility to do something, it is the police's responsibility. I raise the point: if you are the head honcho, the boss of this state, the person who can move football games from Federation Square and then back to Federation Square, and if you have the ability to cancel the Commonwealth Games and fund them in another country, you have an awful lot of power – but the one power you refuse to use is to make sure that the projects that you oversee, the projects that your government says are its signature projects, are in fact being run and managed in the best interests of Victorians. Our Premier refuses to do that. Not only does she refuse to do it, she actually expects others to do it.

We heard last week in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings that the Premier thinks it is the responsibility of an 18-year-old, an apprentice, a young woman tradie, a young person in a workplace who has been stood over or asked to do criminal or corrupt actions, to report the goings on to the police. But when the Premier gets told on the front page of the leading newspapers in the state –

on the front page of the *Age* and the *Herald Sun* – and in every news bulletin for the night, where people relay in technicolour the problems on the Big Build sites, the Premier says, 'That's not my responsibility. That needs to be referred to someone else. Someone else needs to look into that.' The people of Victoria know that the current Premier was the minister responsible, for months and years before she became Premier, for these big projects. She had the opportunity at that time to do something about it, and she did not. She has had the opportunity as Premier to do something about crime and corruption on the Big Build sites, and she has done nothing about it. In fact you could almost argue she has reverted to victim blaming by saying it is the responsibility of those who have been badly done by by the crime and corruption to do all the reporting.

What is even more disappointing is that in the state of Victoria today there would not be a tradie-ute- or crew-cab-driving Victorian who is not aware of the crime and corruption on the Big Build sites. Everybody knows about it. As MPs we hear stories all the time. People on the street hear about it. People in our communities hear about it. People in our communities are worried about these things. We all know that letters of complaint have been sent. And to think that, once again, at PAEC hearings last week, when quizzed, the Premier's chief of staff and the chiefs of staff on the Big Build projects, infrastructure projects and public transport projects all looked like they were blind – 'We didn't hear anything. We haven't heard anything. We haven't seen anything. No-one's told us.' The only people in the state of Victoria today that are unaware of the crime and corruption and the graft and the bikies and the drug dealing and the prostitution on worksites are in fact the Premier of this state, leading ministers and the heads of bureaucracy. It is shameful to think such ignorance has not only been put out on a daily basis by the Premier but put in front of a parliamentary hearing, where these people said, 'We have heard nothing.' It is impossible to believe. It is improbable for Victorians to be expected to believe that everybody knows there is a problem except the government. When presented with the facts, when presented with the stories, when presented with the case studies, they say, 'It's not our responsibility.'

What is even more shocking is that these details, these reports, these inquiries, are not coming to the fore in Victoria through the Parliament, through normal inquiries, through normal processes. The Geoffrey Watson report came to light through a Queensland inquiry into crime and corruption. It is unbelievable to think that a detailed report that could be of great use to a competent, fair-minded government in rooting out crime and corruption on their Big Build sites is not tabled here in this Parliament, is not made available to this Parliament and to the people of Victoria, but is instead presented in Queensland as the only way the author can get it put forward and have light shine upon the corruption that we have in Victoria. It had to come out in Queensland. It was back on 11 February that the Geoffrey Watson report came out with the now infamous $15 billion figure.

At the end of the day this Premier and her ministers are the only people in Victoria that do not believe the $15 billion figure. It has not taken anybody else by surprise. But it has taken the Premier by surprise, and she says it is not true. I say, Premier, if it is not $15 billion, how many billion is it? How many billion will you concede it is? Because, quite frankly, if it is $1, Premier, you have a problem. To have $15 billion, you have got a massive problem, and you refuse to do anything about it. It is not only Geoffrey Watson's good work but also the extensive reporting done by Nick McKenzie at the *Age* and through *60 Minutes* that has been prepared to expose the shortcomings of this government, which this government, this Premier and her ministers, have refuted at every turn.

Not only that but on 25 May another Parliament in Australia had to do the heavy lifting, that being a Senate estimates hearing. What did Senate estimates hear? They heard that there are 56 Big Build project allegations currently before them. Riddle me this: how does the federal Parliament get this brought to its attention and federal bureaucrats and federal ministers get 56 allegations of crime and corruption on Victorian projects but magically the Victorian government, the Victorian Premier and the Victorian ministers hear nothing and see nothing? They leave the work to others in the country. They leave the work on fighting this important issue of crime and corruption in Victoria to the

newspapers and they leave it to the federal Parliament, which by the way is a Labor one, so it is not like you can accuse them of being partisan. They leave it to the Queensland Parliament.

It is simply not good enough. Victorians expect their hard-earned dollars to be spent well and spent wisely, and it should leave fear in every Victorian's heart to think that one of the signature projects that this Premier has banged on about since 2018 is a tunnel from nowhere to nowhere for allegedly $35 billion – a $35 billion tunnel that no-one knew about until 2 minutes before the 2018 election. We never knew about it. You made it up. $35 billion – you got the quote for it from Quotes Are Us in 2020, and you want the Victorian people to believe that the $35 billion quote you got seven years ago is still accurate. Is there a quote anywhere on planet Australia, on this continent, that you received seven years ago that any builder would stand by today? The answer quite simply is they would not. It is a lie. It is a misleading of the people of Victoria. But worse still, that $35 billion quote, that $35 billion unverified quote, does not have $1 in the budget. So I ask this question: when we are so worried about crime and corruption and when we are so worried about the finances of this state, how on earth can a signature project that this government continues to rattle on about not be in the budget? How can we expect it to be paid for fairly, openly, honestly and transparently when it is not in the budget? It is an old quote, and yet we know it will continue to fuel the misdeeds and the corruption that we have all seen laid out night after night in the press, in the newspapers and in common thought around the state of Victoria.

We know that infrastructure is important to Victoria. Victorians need a government they can trust to build infrastructure well, build infrastructure on time and build infrastructure in a way that adds benefit and ongoing growth and opportunity for Victorians, but that is not what we are getting in Victoria. Instead we have stories of bikies, of drug deals, of corruption and of mistitled work programs such as women in construction, which is a Labor government policy as well as a bikie-corrupted work group. They have got the same name. This needs to stop.

Opposition performance

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (16:16): I grieve for the people of Victoria and the impact that that would have on people if the member for Kew ever got her cuts agenda up in Victoria. But I feel as well that I want to grieve for the member for Polwarth. I felt like calling for a quorum. I wanted to see the crew come in here. I wanted to see the energy lift up. But I do have a soft spot for the member for Polwarth. We served on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee for four years together. I think, just personally, that he should be on the front bench. I am just putting it out to Liberal HQ over there and all those champions across the road on Spring Street who will be watching this presentation. I have got a few zingers coming for those legends over there. When we look over there, we need a bit more support over there. The member for Evelyn, the shadow minister, could give a little bit of a text message. It was a good, solid effort. It had the same fear campaign themes around where things are going, the lack of accountability around the cuts that they would make, the impact that they would make in regional Victoria with that crazy policy where they will put a cap on how much investment they will put into regional Victoria. Twenty-five per cent is the threshold across policies. They will cut funding in health and cut funding in education, which are over 25 per cent of the state's contribution. It was a good account, Speaker. I know you will be making ratings out of 10 for how people go. I thought it was a solid effort from the member for Polwarth.

It announced as well that, for those opposite, their heart is not in it. We saw that during question time yesterday. Once they had asked their questions, the eyes were down. No-one was paying attention on the back bench. You do not feel like they have got any sense of readiness to do anything other than cut an absolute amount of services, and it shows in their policy offerings. Besides mowing lawns and getting on forklifts illegally, what is the member for Kew doing? It is like 'Check, one, two' over on Spring Street across the road. What is the opposition office doing, other than bumbling up a few more TikToks and reels that no-one is really watching? What have you got on the go? There is no policy offering.

Brad Battin interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: I was going to come to the member for Berwick, because I also have a little bit of a soft spot for the member for Berwick. I still grieve for the member for Berwick, a fellow traveller from Berwick. He has stayed in Berwick his whole life. I left as a kid. I still grieve for the member for Berwick. What did he do? He was doing all right. They were polling all right. He was answering the questions around One Nation. As soon as the member for Berwick nicked off, the whole – I will not mention the proverbial fan, Speaker, that would be unparliamentary. But it did. What happened? The primary was up in the 30s. It was whipping around. We had the gun show over there going on and all the fireside chats. He had the Geelong jersey on. He was doing the dunk. We were up and about for it. We were getting a bit excited. Then he was gone. Where is the primary now of the Liberal–National parties? If you take the Nationals out of it, goodness me, it is in all sorts. They are in the low 20s.

You have got Angus Taylor begging for Tony Abbott to come back nationally. I mean, it is yesterday's heroes. The answer to the existential crisis that the Liberals face is Angus Taylor and Tony Abbott. I mean, 'Hello, is this thing on?' This is not 2010 or 2013, is it? It is an extraordinary moment for the Liberal Party. We sit over here on this side and go, 'How could they make a decision that is so self-inflicting and damaging?' I was talking to a colleague about it earlier on. I thought, 'We could not write a script as ridiculous as this.' You chose Tony Abbott and then got him out on Sky News after his little kitchen chat with Peta Credlin, which was all kinds of weird. But then they go, 'Oh, I've got a bright idea. Let's bring back Tony Abbott, who had the dust-up with Pauline Hanson.' Remember that? He was the one who smothered One Nation. Then he has a moment where he comes back into realisation and says, 'Oh, that's what we've got to do. We've got to go further to the right. We don't want to fight on the right. We want to go after Anthony Albanese. We want to go after this Labor government and destroy the Liberal Party as we know it today.'

Well, the numbers that we have seen show they are absolutely achieving in record terms. We see the Liberal Party now in almost irrelevance nationally, and One Nation – Pauline Hanson or Barnaby Joyce or whoever else fronts up – will then lead them. This is really systemic to them, where we see their behaviours and actions. Obviously the now Liberal president Brian Loughnane comes back. We know he is royalty in the Liberal circles here, but he knows a thing or two about cuts. Where was Brian when the Abbott and Hockey budget of hell was delivered? Where was he? He was in Canberra. He was in Canberra when they were having the cigars and saying, 'Let's smash the hell out of Australians. Let's cut every bit of service that ever existed. He was there. You do not need to be Sherlock Holmes to work out this riddle and where I am going. This is one of the worst crime plots you will ever see. Brian is the cuts legend. You have got Tony Abbott as the cuts legend in 2013 – I know you are following along. The cuts are there. He has come back. Brian is back, and what does he say? Brian has made a call for unity which follows years of factional warfare. I mean, Brian is one of the kings of the factional warfare. Remember that? Abbott, Turnbull, Scott Morrison – goodness me. So he has come back, and he is calling for unity, which follows years of the factional fighting within the state division. He has issued this call to arms for this unity against the backdrop of continuing legal action between members of the party's governing administrative committee.

That is the backdrop that those opposite say that they are ready to govern Victorians on. I mean, the member for Brighton was threatening to go to court earlier on today about electoral matters. Those at the party head office down at Lib HQ all started hyperventilating because they are still paying off the member for Hawthorn's loan. They are going, 'Don't promise any more legals. No more legals. We don't want any more legal action.' You know the member for Brighton has got his juris doctor now. He just did that one on the side. He maybe just did that one while he was doing his work. Maybe he will know what the legal threshold is for legal aid. It is when you do not have any money and you need some support. I am saying here: just write to the Attorney-General and ask for some legal aid assistance for the Liberal Party's next challenge against each other. But because they are always fighting each other, it is first in, best dressed. So whichever one of them goes to court against themselves first will

be the first, and then the others will have a conflict of interest, so get in early because the legal show and the legal shemozzle that is the Liberal Party will continue on forever and a day.

This mob thinks that they can front up with half-baked policies, jump on a forklift illegally or mow grass or jump over some high jumps and say, 'We're serious.' At least the Nationals do some policy work. Let us not go near there. The member for Gippsland South, the Leader of the Nationals, got admonished by the member for Murray Plains when he said they should split from the coalition, but I think he was the oracle. I think he saw this coming. I will give him his flowers, the member for Gippsland South. I am just going through my favourites of those coalition legends over there, but he is one of the faves, the Leader of the Nationals. But remember that a week in he goes, 'They're no good.' Now Walshy, the member for Murray Plains, was in the freezer, but they repair quickly because there is only about eight of them or something. You do not have to go through too much factional territory. You have got to find two mates and then you are in. That is it; you are done. You can get a leadership. The member for Euroa, you can have a chance. There are only a few of you. Just have a few friends. Just take them out for coffee and you will be leader by the end of the week. Just look at all that they have lined up.

In comes the member for Murray Plains. I will tell you, this is well timed. For those that were in transit, what we were saying, member for Murray Plains, was the member for Gippsland South wanted to break the coalition. It is my understanding that the member for Murray Plains was not very happy about that, so the member for Gippsland South was in the freezer for a little bit, but I think he was the oracle. That was the point I was making, because he and others saw that the Liberal Party is a corrosive, destructive force in Victorian politics at the moment. They are trying to be populist without a base. One Nation does that. The true origins of the two-party system – or as I said before, with the Greens political party, the multiparty system that we have now – have served Victorians well for decades, and we are seeing this eroded in the biggest possible frame.

Those opposite cannot blame anyone else. They cannot blame anyone other than themselves. What we saw during federal circumstances and what we saw during the pandemic eroded trust and pumped up populists and now we find ourselves in this position. Guess what, the polling is different in New South Wales because of the standards that they set. Premier Minns and opposition leader Sloane – it is a completely different tone. It has not always been that way, but just look at how Kellie Sloane and Chris Minns fronted up during a crisis. Look at what happened. Look at what Sussan Ley did to Anthony Albanese, look at what happened here in smaller circumstances. This is a moment in time. I think the Liberal Party has missed it and it has gone. I do not think they can correct. I think it is over, and we are dealing with the One Nation types into the future. If it is next term or the term after, the Liberal Party will cease to exist, and I think the Nationals might have three seats. It is that cataclysmic, and every bit of multilevel regression with poststratification modelling shows that.

This is the nub of the issue of why I grieve today for if the Wilson coalition ever got near the Treasury benches. It is because they need to be populist for their survival – to cut and destroy the public service, because that is exactly what One Nation populists will do. That is exactly it. It is about the ideals, and the member for Kew is on the record as saying business creates jobs, not government. For anyone working in anything that has a connection to government now, that means your job is irrelevant. The member for Kew does not back teachers; the member for Kew does not back nurses. If you are in any sort of construction or you are in any government role, the member for Kew will see you go.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, these are baseless accusations. Speaker Maddigan ruled in the past that the grievance debate is not an opportunity to personally attack members of the opposition. I would ask you to uphold that.

The SPEAKER: It is a grievance debate. It has been far ranging. It is a point of debate.

Tim RICHARDSON: I know it is tough to front up to the consequences of saying those opposite would cut one in seven workers. It is tough. I get that, member for Evelyn. I was shocked as much as

you were. If I had not read all the material, I would think it was a personal attack as well. I give you credit for that. I was so shocked at the time. I thought, 'The member for Kew couldn't do this. The member for Kew couldn't go and cut one in seven jobs in Victoria and destroy the public service.' Just from a political standpoint, after what Jeff Kennett did and after what Tony Abbott did, I would come to the same conclusion: it would be unconscionable for a Liberal leader who says that they are a millennial on the side of people in her generation to go and absolutely hack into the services that we rely on as Victorians. I get that. It is hard to take, but it is reality.

It is something that we will remind Victorians about for the next 177 days up until election day, because they need to know that these populist, nasty decisions that destroy confidence in our state have consequences. Forty billion dollars in cuts is going to hurt. Show me an example where austerity has led to better prosperity and where destroying the confidence, trust and aspiration of Victorians has led to a better outcome. It does not exist. You have got to build up hope and aspiration. That is what this government has done in its investment and in its prioritisation of growth, creating jobs and building hope for the future. You do not cut the place to pieces. You do not do nothing for the next decade for numbers in a budget paper and an ideology that would make libertarians blush. We need to be honest and accountable to this.

We know that this is the rich hallmark of a One Nation–Liberal preference deal that will then be embedded in a One Nation–Liberal coalition. Those opposite can deny it. Those opposite can say it does not exist. We will not see too many Nationals next time; it will be orange in here. Half of them will be on the crossbench like they always are. Remember the Queensland legend in One Nation? Goodness me, I think there were 11, and 10 were gone in the first year or two to the crossbench. We know how dismal that looks, but those opposite have created the recipe for that.

If they do not accept that contention, here is the point. Tony Abbott said, as the president of the Liberal Party, 'We no longer fight on the right.' They have given up. They have given up fighting One Nation. It is all over. Those opposite can laugh, but on multilevel regression with poststratification and polling, the Nationals seats do not exist. The member for Morwell is a ripper guy, but 18 of the worst booths are One Nation in the whole lot. You look at it and go, 'The alarm bells are going off for populism here,' and no-one on the right is standing up and doing anything about it – no-one. The ones on the left have. We have pushed the Greens back and taken seats back – Griffith, Melbourne, Northcote. Have a look at that. While those opposite say that they have ceded that space – we wish them well in the future – it will be Labor governments that have to fight for working people against One Nation, rather than Liberals and Nationals into the future, because that is the dawn of time right now, and I grieve for a system that has One Nation as such a dominant feature.

Government performance

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (16:31): That is 15 minutes we will not get back, isn't it. That is quite the rabble for the minister for the backbench. But we will stick to the grievance debate. I am going to take it down a notch and not just have this waffle and inaccuracies and misleading debate. I want to talk about the impact of this corruption that we are seeing on local standards, local examples.

Today I am standing up to grieve for residents in the Euroa electorate, for regional Victoria and for every family that has been let down by a government that has totally lost its way. I am grieving for the woman who is in a tent tonight in the Longwood bushfire region. I am grieving for someone who saw her home burn down and has to stay in a tent this winter. I am grieving for the truck driver who nearly lost his life on a road that Labor refuses to fix. I am grieving for a nurse who cannot do her job because they cannot afford a fridge to store critical blood for road accidents. And I am grieving for a region that is growing so fast and being left behind consistently, deliberately and absolutely with complete arrogance by the Labor government. What I can understand is that when you have a government consumed by hiding and enabling corruption, when its energy goes into covering its tracks rather than governing for all of Victoria, this is what happens to Victorians. What I am about to describe is not a list of complaints, this is a record of the consequences of corruption in Victoria.

Let us start with what I can only describe as the most shameful response to a natural disaster we have ever seen in Victoria. Following the January Longwood bushfires, five months on, 15 people remain in tents this winter – 15 people in the freezing cold while modular homes sit unused in storage. These are homes left over from Black Summer in 2020, gathering dust in government facilities. And do not gaslight me – they have tried. I have seen them with my own eyes. The Allan Labor government announced $33 million for 100 new modular homes. It equates to about 330 grand per modular home, which to me is well above market value, but if the CFMEU are involved, I am sure there is a bit of a tip on the –

Jade Benham interjected.

Annabelle CLEELAND: And the building authorities, not to mention that as well. When you do the maths, who is set to benefit? Why are modular homes sitting in storage, families in tents and the government saying they are going to take six months to build them and to get them out there? What makes it worse is that I am hearing through whistleblowers from Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) that they are desperately trying to offload those stored homes before the end of this financial year, not to house victims of a disaster but to record them as revenue. Let that sink in. They are trying to sell modular homes already built for revenue and allowing people to tolerate this winter in tents.

We are seeing it now. The first week of winter has been terrifyingly cold up there. We will not survive if this is the heartless response of the government. This is not bureaucratic inefficiency. This is a deliberate, calculated choice that leaves human beings and families in tents. These are the government's figures, by the way. EMV staff have shared these with me because they are heartbroken about what they are being asked to do. This is going down a path that is cruelly impacting every Victorian, and it follows after my calls about the dysfunctional clean-up program. Months on, whistleblowers are telling me that just 70 homes have been cleaned up – 70 homes in five months. Speaker, this is your electorate too. After Black Summer more than 700 homes were cleaned up in the same period. Contrast that this week with 70 homes cleaned up in five months. This is one-tenth of the performance, and the Allan Labor government wants to call that recovery. That is absolute abandonment.

More than 600 people have registered for the clean-up program. How many people do you think qualify? About 200, they reckon. But I want to know how many have been pulled off the clean-up program because it has taken them too long. The problem that we are seeing now is that it has taken so long, they have dipped into their own little financial reserves and cleaned up their property themselves, and now they cannot afford to rebuild. They are paying rates on worthless properties. In the past the precedent has been three years of rate relief. If this government has a heart, I want to see three years of rate relief and three years of exemption from the emergency services tax, because the guys that got burnt out, they are the ones that are paying for a tax. They are the ones that turned out to put their lives on the line and defend and protect our community, and they lost their own properties. Now they are paying thousands in a tax that we are committed to scrapping when we are elected in November. They have properties with nothing on them, and they cannot afford to rebuild – no rate relief, no emergency services tax relief, no fast-tracking of the permit approval process. People literally cannot rebuild a shed because they are told to wait three years. They are in tents. This government are telling my community that they have turned their back on them. What I am seeing in the Longwood recovery does not only look like incompetence; it is a pattern where this government is more focused on corruption and wasting money in Melbourne. It has turned its back on families that need it now more than ever. It was elected to represent all of Victoria, and particularly those who are going through a disaster.

I want to talk about health – another pivot to some of the consequences of this government. This week I was reached out to by a local nurse at Benalla Health, and she said to me their fridge that has a 10-year life span is up to 15 years. It broke, and someone turned up to fix it and said, 'This isn't going to last.' We have $15,000 of blood reserves for road accidents and for crises and health emergencies in our community, and we do not have a working fridge. What is happening to Victoria? It is not just

that. She said, 'I will not turn up to work because the monitors to care for people in urgent care broke.' At about a grand a monitor, they are now having to lease them because they cannot afford them.

Ambulances and paramedics – I am hearing from several of my local paramedics who were motivated to do the course and now cannot get a job. More than two years on, our paramedics cannot get a job. They would help fix the ambulance crisis caused by the Allan Labor government, and they cannot get a job. What does that look like in terms of consequences for my community? It looks like Murray and Pam Ellis.

Steve McGhie interjected.

Annabelle CLEELAND: They are advertising jobs in my community and not employing locals. The same job was advertised six times over two years. They are not employing anyone. But I enjoy your rebuttal, because you are clearly out of touch.

Let us talk about what the consequences are when you cannot get an ambulance. Pam and Murray Ellis of Strathbogie called when Murray was having excruciating pain, and the call-taker said, 'Sorry, Pam, there is no ambulance in your region this evening.' Everyone, imagine that you are calling to protect someone you love and imagine there is no ambulance. Imagine hauling your husband into a car at 1 am and taking him hundreds of kilometres to the nearest hospital, where he is then admitted for several days because of his deteriorated condition. Imagine being told there is no ambulance. I recall once upon a time a former Labor Premier saying every minute counts. Yes, every minute counts, even for regional Victorians, even for people that live hundreds of kilometres from a hospital. It matters to our communities.

Road conditions – I recently went for a drive with Archie Baines, who is an absolute icon in the trucking world across Australia.

Jade Benham: I saw that reel.

Annabelle CLEELAND: It was a good one. He replayed an accident on the Goulburn Valley Highway that nearly claimed his life. Let me tell you, it is quite interesting sitting in the truck of someone who is so tough, so experienced and so traumatised by the condition of these roads. We went past and we saw the pothole. Surprise, surprise, after a near fatal accident it had been fixed. But there was another one right next to it. He went through from Nagambie to Shepparton and home again and highlighted the deterioration in the road and what this is going to mean for road users. I have got to ask: what does it look like when a government is quite aware about the road toll and accidents and claims? The 40 grand of damage to his truck will be repaid by the Allan Labor government because it was their responsibility. This is what happens. They tried to lift the rebate to $1500 because they were paying out so much.

Jade Benham: How many have they done, do you know?

Annabelle CLEELAND: Not many, I think.

Jade Benham: Thirteen.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Thirteen – no surprise. But driving with Archie Baines, you can see that 100-odd kilometres of the barrier on the side has been destroyed because of the number of accidents because of the condition of the roads. The government gets the data. They choose to turn a blind eye and funnel money into Melbourne projects and crooks.

I also want to quickly talk about the overlay this government has put on my region – Kilmore and Broadford – a 300 per cent increase in our population in the coming years. We want to complain, and we are going to get accused of nimbyism, allegations that we do not want it in our backyard, but we do not mind so long as we have the infrastructure and the services to accommodate that population. So, do we? We do not even have a public secondary school in Kilmore – a population of more than 14,000 people. There are no mental health services in the southern Hume region. Public transport is

4 kilometres from the town centre and students have to walk. We have a bus that is not even aligned with the train timetable, and kids are waiting hours to get on the bus. Rather than fixing this, the Minister for Education has just removed the education zoning under the condition that Broadford can accommodate the increase in students. I met with the Broadford Secondary School committee, and I learned this week that the Treasurer last December invited her in and dangled a carrot: 'You're silent, and you'll get $16 million to accommodate the increase in students.'

Lauren Kathage interjected.

Annabelle CLEELAND: It is outrageous. Do you know what is outrageous? There was nothing in the budget. There are two Mod 10s to accommodate hundreds of students. And what is outrageous – you are right, member for Yan Yean – is that these classrooms are operating off a generator. Argue with that one. It is shocking. You are spot on. It is shocking. Our classrooms are operating off a generator. The Treasurer promised a $16 million project and what eventuated was a couple of dongas, a couple of portable classrooms. Next year they cannot deliver the Victorian curriculum with the increased number of students and the inadequate infrastructure that they have. The electrician said, 'No more classrooms off these generators, because they cannot cope.'

There are classrooms and no toilets. There is no sink for a staffroom. There is black mould in some of the wellbeing centre. There is complete neglect and misleading support from this government, absolutely. It is robbing Peter to pay Paul, and Victorian kids pay the price. This is what happens when a government's attention is no longer on Victorians, when it is focused on and consumed by survival, by managing allegations, by silencing critics and by cutting deals rather than governing. The people of Kilmore see it, and in November Victorians will remember it.

I recently met with the member for Ovens Valley at the Glenrowan pub with 100-odd people who are fuming about the state's transmission plan with renewable energy zones. People are not opposing solar. They are opposing this government that is ramming them through and destroying our agricultural land, destroying our environment and destroying our community's choice.

Opposition performance

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (16:46): I stand here this afternoon to grieve for Victorians whose jobs will be cut –

A member interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: I have been; I have done a lot – under a future Liberal government. In fact I stand here this afternoon to grieve for all Victorians if those opposite ever get the gift of government again. Since coming to government in 2022 this government has created over 300,000 jobs and also has the fastest growing economy anywhere in this country. They are just facts. Every single one of those jobs, including many, many jobs in the public sector, are at risk if the vandals on the opposition benches get the gift of government ever again. How do we know this? Because they have been up-front with the Victorian people and with this Parliament about what their economic plan is going to be into the future. I will make the point that their economic plan is akin to basically putting a thousand dollars each way on the number one dog at Meadows on a Monday night. They have been up-front with the Victorian people. What they have said that they will do is slash $40 billion from the Victorian economy in the way of public sector jobs. 7500 jobs are on the line at this election in the public sector here in Melbourne, but you cannot cut that deep and you cannot cut that hard with the public service without affecting frontline workers.

We have seen it before. It means that under a future Liberal government there will be less teachers in our schools, there will be less nurses in our hospitals, there will be less police on the beat, there will be less firefighters keeping us safe and there will be less paramedics attending to emergencies and to sick Victorians. We have seen it before. In previous iterations of Liberal governments – let us go back to 2010 and 2014 – they went to war with our firefighters. Indeed, member for Melton, they went to

war with our paramedics, and they did so because they did not respect their work. They did not think that they deserved a good wage for the incredibly hard work that they do. They did not think that we needed to continue to employ those frontline services. They cut money out of education. They cut money out of health. Go back even further than that – the point that I am making is it is in their DNA. Every time I mention former Premier Jeff Kennett, the cries from the opposition benches are 'That was 30 years ago' or whatever it is. Yes, but he is their hero. It is in their DNA. They want to be Jeff. They love the guy.

You can bet your bottom dollar if there is a future Wilson Liberal government in this state, the member for Kew has already said that she will cut $40 billion out of our economy. That will mean that our economy will not be growing as fast as it is right now. It will no longer be the fastest growing economy anywhere in the country. But she will also sack 7500 workers. The member for Narracan might laugh, but frankly it is sad. And the people of Victoria should be concerned, because they are a dangerous, dangerous show, a special collection of deadbeats who want to come in here –

Wayne Farnham: Speaker, I think you know what I am going to call a point of order on.

The SPEAKER: I remind the member for Tarneit to use parliamentary language.

Dylan WIGHT: We know what those opposite, as incompetent as they are, will do if given the gift of government ever again. They have been up-front with the Victorian people about it; I will at least give them credit for that. But we on this side and Victorian workers should make no mistake of what is on the line come 28 November this year. It is a binary choice. I understand there is a third party that is acting as a disrupter at the moment, but as to who will govern, it is still a binary choice between a Labor government that has created 300,000 jobs since coming to office, that is growing the economy and that respects the work of paramedics and firefighters and teachers and nurses and healthcare professionals and a Wilson-led Liberal cut squad who have already said, point blank, that they will sack – I cannot use the word 'you' – Victorian workers. That is what is on the line. Everybody in Victoria, every worker in Victoria, every frontline worker in Victoria and really anybody working in the Victorian economy should be cognisant of that and understand what is on the line when they walk to that ballot box.

Furthermore – and I know that the member for Mordialloc touched on this somewhat – there is a third disrupter in the Victorian political system at the moment that is going to play a role when we go to the ballot box. We have already seen it time and time and time again and that former Premier providing advice that the opposition just lurch further to the right in order to appease One Nation supporters, One Nation voters, the One Nation curious and also the party itself. Victorian voters need to understand the ramifications of a Liberal–One Nation government. There is no capacity for them to govern in their own right. People need to understand the ramifications of a Liberal–One Nation government. Take something as simple as the minimum wage increase awarded to the lowest paid Australian workers – Victorian workers – in the last 48 hours: 4.75 per cent, still slightly under inflation. It is not an inflationary wage increase. These are people that are struggling to make ends meet. They are not going to pump up the price of holidays or housing or anything of that nature. They are putting food on the table. Funnily enough, a 4.75 per cent wage increase was 4.75 per cent more than the Liberal Party or One Nation wanted. They did not want an increase: 'It would be inflationary.' I understand that is more of a federal issue than it is a state issue, but people need to understand that they are cut from the same cloth. They are anti-union; we have heard all of that today. They are anti-worker; we have heard all of that today. They never met a worker that they did not want to sack. Honestly, for those two organisations to come out and speak against an at least near inflation increase for Australia's lowest paid workers is one of the lowest acts in the current climate that you can imagine, and if we end up with a Liberal and One Nation coalition in this place, you can bet your bottom dollar that that is exactly what we will get.

We have seen them do it before. They will go to war with our essential services and with our teachers. They will go to war with our health professionals, with our nurses, because they do not respect their

work. They think they should all be working in private hospitals. They will go to war with our teachers, as I said, and they will go to war with our paramedics and our firefighters. It is in their playbook. We have seen them. Every single time one of these enterprise agreements comes up, those workers will stop and there will be industrial action because those opposite do not believe that these workers should earn a decent living and a decent wage to be able to keep food on the table for their families, put a roof over their head and wrap a car around them. That is why I grieve for Victorians.

Out in my part of the west, the Wyndham LGA, we have been making significant investments into health care. In the last term we stood up the urgent care clinic. Obviously now, under a Labor government, they have taken back the responsibility for primary health care that the former Liberal government decided they wanted to run away from. But what we are also doing is extending the emergency department at the Werribee Mercy Hospital, a really important project. It is a busy hospital. It is a growing area. For that emergency department, under this budget we have provided extra money to be able to open, staff and facilitate it. It is twice as big as the previous emergency department, so it requires extra funds. It will allow a doubling of the amount of patients that can be seen in the emergency department of the Werribee Mercy Hospital. There is no way under a Liberal–One Nation coalition that those investments into growing areas like the western suburbs would be made.

Furthermore, to be able to open that emergency department we needed to hire more nurses, we needed to hire more healthcare professionals and we needed to hire more allied health professionals and doctors. Does anybody in this place think that under a Liberal government that would be the case? I can already see the member for Narracan smirking, because he is going to stand up and talk about a hospital out in Narracan somewhere. In the western suburbs of Melbourne, whether that be Tarneit, Footscray, Werribee or Melton, there is only one party that has ever invested in it. There is only one party that has hired more police in the west, that has hired more paramedics in the west, that has built fire stations in the west, that has built schools in the west and that has upgraded hospitals in the west. There is only one party that has ever done it.

I heard the member for Caulfield earlier wax lyrical about the western suburbs and how the Liberal Party will represent the western suburbs. Well, that would be new, because they have never, ever done it before, and they have had many chances. They had a pretty long-term government under former Premier Jeff Kennett. They had four years to do it when the population in the western suburbs was exploding, and instead of building more schools, upgrading hospitals or hiring paramedics or firefighters, they were signing horrendous precinct structure plans that are still crippling the outer suburbs where I live. In Wyndham, since coming to power in 2014 we have built 14 schools. Obviously, to facilitate the educational outcomes in said schools we have also hired dozens and dozens of new teachers to teach some of our most fantastic multicultural families and long-time Wyndham residents.

Compare and contrast that at a local level to the track record of the Liberal Party. When they were in power between 2010 and 2014, the population in Tarneit alone exploded – it is a really fast growing area, as we know; I talk about it a lot – and there was not one new school, not one new teacher and not one school upgrade. It is an electorate of two halves, Tarneit: there is the new and exploding Tarneit, but there is also Hoppers Crossing, which has been there since the 1970s and 80s and obviously requires some capital upgrades, particularly to schools. There was not one capital upgrade and not one new school. Since Labor came to power in 2014 there have been 14 new schools in Wyndham; capital works upgrades to The Grange, to Hoppers Crossing Secondary and to Mossfiel; new teachers; and new educational support staff. Under a Liberal government there was none of it.

As I said at the beginning, I stand here this afternoon and grieve for every Victorian worker if those opposite in the Liberal Party, One Nation and the Nationals – I do not think there will be any Nationals left, to be fair – ever get the gift of government again. Life will be harder for every Victorian worker if those opposite ever come to government.

Government performance

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (17:01): Labor has let down my community. Earlier this year – during the school holidays, thank goodness – Collingwood College's ceiling began to collapse, with chunks of concrete falling into classrooms, forcing them to close off a third of their learning spaces. Students now cannot access the science labs or the computer classrooms, affecting their ability to learn at a crucial time of their lives. The school council and management raised the alarm about the ceiling stability multiple times, but it took me lining up the media to get this government to do anything about it, and even then we were looking at bandaids, temporary portable cabins, with no timeline for serious structural repairs and upgrades to make Collingwood College safe, now and into the future. Local residents, parents, the community and students should have been listened to from the very start. I am calling on the government to follow through with urgent and extensive repairs to Collingwood College and to stop pork-barrelling school funding.

Parents at Spensley Street Primary School in Clifton Hill have also been fighting for basic repairs to make their school functional. Spensley Street is a thriving community, but its facilities have been neglected by this government for decades and the school is desperate for upgrades. After huge pressure from me in Parliament and from the local community and, again, media attention, the government finally agreed to the bare minimum: repairing the toilet blocks, where the toilets constantly need unblocking. The blocks are growing moss and have unstable floors and walls. For years children have not wanted to go to the toilet while they were at school because the toilet blocks were in such a state. This was urgent and critical, and frankly the delivery from the government is very little and very late. There are still urgent upgrades to the admin spaces, collaboration spaces and first-aid spaces that have not been funded. I will keep pushing for that, because the Clifton Hill community deserves so much better.

Every morning in Clifton Hill and Collingwood hundreds of workers, children, students and local residents cross the multilane highway that is Alexandra Parade. But the crossing at Gold Street is dangerous and not fit for purpose despite traffic lights and the crossing supervisors working really hard to ensure everybody's safety. The timing of the lights heavily favours pedestrians. The crossing is too narrow and not well delineated for the dozens of pedestrians and cyclists that cross at one time. Many cars leave the freeway and just speed through the red light, putting kids at risk. This intersection must be made safer for schoolchildren, pedestrians and cyclists, so I am calling once again on the local council and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to work together to make this crossing safe.

Our young people are being short-changed. At a time when this government seem to be hell-bent on focusing on youth crime, funnelling billions of dollars into our prison system, they are stripping support for critical community-based preventative programs that give our young people the best chance in life. The Sunrise homework club in Collingwood and Richmond helps 86 young people from Collingwood and Richmond public housing estates to complete their homework, have a meal and connect with community. It is run by the local parents, some of whom are still learning English themselves. The homework club also gives those parents culturally appropriate support networks to deal with navigating school and government bureaucracy and a landing pad for newly arrived refugee and migrant families, and it really helps develop strong community bonds. Young people who have been students there at the homework club have gone on to uni and then come back to teach the next generation. Because of the community's and the Greens' advocacy, Yarra council has recently reinstated the funding that was cut last year, but it only covers a really small proportion of the funding that they need. So we are now asking the state government to step in with $90,000 a year to cover teachers, textbooks, supplies and meals for the students. At a time when migrant communities are being scapegoated and young people need all the support that they can get, I urge the state government to step in and support the Sunrise homework club.

Airtime Basketball runs an amazing youth crime prevention program. Head coach Manny Hendrix Jr and the Airtime Basketball community have fostered meaningful connections with hundreds of young people, mainly from African backgrounds, and many of them are Collingwood public housing estate

residents. Manny's approach is to engage people in basketball as an access point to holistic wraparound support, including mental health specialists, nutritionists, mentors, drivers and homework tutors. Programs like this prevent youth crime that Labor and the Libs are constantly trying to outdo each other on. Rather than ruining more lives by locking kids up and increasing the chance of them reoffending when they get out, we can actually look at the evidence for preventative programs like Airtime Basketball. I urge the state government to recognise the value of holistic programs like Airtime Basketball and like the Sunrise homework club and deliver the money that they need to give young kids the best chance in life.

Labor has failed our community when it comes to public transport. Richmond station is not fit for purpose. Ten thousand workers flow through it daily, but it has not seen an upgrade in 60 years. The platforms are narrow, the surrounding areas are dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists and it is not accessible for people who use wheelchairs. Two of the three exits are often closed because the government contract requires them to be staffed when they are open, so they just close them. Keep the gates open, upgrade the station and upgrade the surrounding areas in Richmond and Cremorne to bring in better flow and to get more open space and safer access for pedestrians and cyclists. Burnley station has also been neglected by the state government. The only access to it is an underpass that floods when it rains. The ramps to the platforms do not meet basic accessibility standards. This urgently needs to be updated. East Richmond station has infrequent services. Despite being on one of Melbourne's busiest rail corridors, many trains pass through and few actually stop. The residents have told me they are fed up. They want more trains stopping at East Richmond station, and I am joining them to ask, as the populations of Richmond, Burnley and Cremorne continue to grow, that our public transport options grow too.

Local residents in Abbotsford and Richmond are asking for more community investment for a community and cultural centre on Victoria Street, for trees and plants along the shopping strip, for a support centre for those in need and to help revitalise the local shops. We were lucky to be able to secure $2 million of investment into the North Richmond precinct fund, but this is not enough. Many of us have been calling for support for people sleeping rough and for those struggling with mental illness or drug addiction in the area. Yet Labor stripped support for young people who are using drugs or at risk of committing crimes when they defunded YSAS, and Yarra council, by order of the mayor, completely defunded the Yarra Drug and Health Forum, which coordinates a local response to drug and alcohol use between the council, the government, the community, the health services and the police. Right now we are seeing the impact of both of those moves, and anyone can predict that it spells disaster for the future of the Richmond and Abbotsford communities. That is why I am calling on the council and the state government to urgently reinstate funding for these important services. This district has been the centre of Victoria's Vietnamese community for decades, and we want to see it thrive. For that we need a big vision, we need proper funding and we need ongoing support for the local community, particularly for those who are struggling.

The Greens will always support evidence-based harm reduction approaches to drug use and addiction. That is why I am proud to host the supervised injecting facility and Victoria's only pill-testing facility in my electorate. The medically supervised injecting room is a lifeline for so many. It has saved hundreds of lives and safely managed thousands of overdoses. They offer wraparound services to drug users, social support, housing support and pathways to better health and employment. North Richmond Community Health has secured a couple of outreach workers who can leave the centre and assist people in the surrounding area, and they do such an incredible job. I have called on them personally to help someone I could see was having a mental health crisis. But they are stretched thin, and the need is only growing. That is why I am calling on the government to fund additional outreach workers in Abbotsford and Richmond and will keep pushing for more supervised injecting rooms wherever there is need.

Cohealth in Collingwood and Fitzroy have been fighting for survival. Over many years they have consistently asked for more support from the Victorian and federal Labor governments so that they

can deliver health services to people with complex needs. Pressure from our community and from the Greens secured a temporary reprieve, but the government cannot expect Cohealth to run a functional health service if they have to fight every 12 months for breadcrumbs. That is no way to run a health service. They need permanent, sustainable funding and more infrastructure support to be able to deliver their vital services for our community. Since 2019 Cohealth has had a shovel-ready plan to rebuild their crumbling facility in Collingwood, along with 50 co-located community homes for people with complex health needs to live in. But Labor has refused to fund this important health centre. This is an urgent call on the state government to cough up the money to rebuild the Collingwood health centre, alongside this additional housing, as recommended by the independent review that was released today and is supported by the community.

While this year's budget support at the federal level was about winding back tax concessions for property investors, Labor at a Victorian level quietly extended its uncapped stamp duty concession for off-the-plan apartments and townhouses until April 2027. This concession, which is open to ultrawealthy property developers buying multimillion-dollar penthouses, costs taxpayers millions of dollars every year. Last year it was reported that buyers of luxury developments were the main beneficiary of the scheme. One recipient saved $1.1 million on a $20 million purchase in a luxury development in Armadale. Labor says this concession will help boost housing supply, but experts have described it as a windfall for developments that would have proceeded anyway and for buyers who would have purchased regardless. If this scheme was really about helping struggling people get into home ownership, surely there would be a cap on the concession. Every dollar this Labor government spends on an uncapped tax concession for billionaires and property investors is a dollar that cannot be invested elsewhere to get people in need of a home into a home.

This is a grievance motion. This is an opportunity to raise complaints and problems, and I have left my biggest grievance until last. Like so many of the activists engaged on this issue, I am exhausted talking about it over and over with not a shred of compassion or interest from the Labor government, banging our heads against a brick wall. I am referring to their plans to demolish all of Victoria's 44 public housing towers. It is an outrageous, expensive, poorly thought out and frankly inhumane plan that affects my constituency more than most. We have the most public housing in our electorate, with around 500 local residents that are going to be impacted – families who will be moved away from their school, elderly people who will no longer have access to their GPs and communities that will be torn apart. It will completely gut the public housing that our state provides, which is already shamefully the lowest in the country.

Just yesterday the government responded to the parliamentary inquiry, rejecting all but four of the 21 recommendations. After such compelling testimony, frankly, it is arrogant and disrespectful that Labor is charging ahead with a disastrous plan to demolish and privatise all our public housing towers in Victoria, despite the parliamentary inquiry clearly recommending otherwise. This project has no support from experts, no support from the community, no justification and no public benefit. They refuse to rule out selling off public land to developers. They could not guarantee there would be any public housing built on future redevelopments, and they refuse to publish a case-by-case justification for demolishing over retrofitting. Labor is refusing our community transparency, refusing people their human rights, refusing expert advice and refusing to tell us the truth: who really benefits from this project? The only winners are private developers, who want access to valuable land, and Labor, who want their dirty donations. The Victorian Labor government have proven that they have no interest in ensuring that people have housing; they have made that clear. But that will not stop us from fighting this every step of the way.

Education funding

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (17:15): I am sad to say I would grieve for the state of Victoria were a Liberal–Nationals–One Nation combination to be elected. You might ask why. What is really driving this grief? I will give credit to the Leader of the Opposition. She has not been shy about saying they would commit 25 per cent of school infrastructure funding to the regions. The only problem with this –

and it is a big problem – is that this would be a cut from the more than 30 per cent Labor is delivering right now. What does that translate to? It is literally putting at risk 1100 upgrades that Labor has delivered for regional communities. If you put that in round terms, that is a real impact. I am going to unpack that further in the broader picture of the $40 billion worth of cuts which would see one in seven workers losing their job. What does that actually mean? We know that the biggest cost-of-living elements and help for families are public health care and education. These are the first two pillars that would definitely cop it. We know by contrast, for instance, that our Allan Labor government has invested $4.9 billion into education in the 2026–27 budget. That is testament to our values and to the commitment that we continue to make when it comes to education. Education is a pillar of our community, something that all generations, from one generation to the next, rely on and something that as a Labor government we put the utmost priority on.

You might wonder if we are really sure they would do it, even though they have not been backward in coming forward – that is, the opposition leader – in terms of spelling out those cuts. Last time they had the chance the coalition slashed more than $1 billion from education, so we know they have form. On the one hand we have the evidence of the past, but also they have been very up-front – and I will pay homage to that; I will pay them some credit for the fact that they have been up-front – about what they are proposing to do.

When we are looking at the real consequences for Victorian students, for instance, we know from the most recent NAPLAN data that Victorian students not only are the top performing in the country but also are performing better than at any other time on record. We know that when the coalition was last in government our best result was less than half that – only four measures. When the coalition were in government Victoria slipped down the national NAPLAN rankings. When we are looking at the impact these cuts would have we can see from the past but also from the most recent announcements about what they propose that what they call 'savings' are we would say are 'cuts'. We know that Victorian students achieved the highest or second-highest mean scores in 18 out of 20 NAPLAN measures, and that is because of the investment.

I really want to pay respect to our teachers, because they are leading the way, and they certainly are supporting our students to drive these fantastic outcomes. We know that Victorian students continue to excel, with more kids in the strong or exceeding bands – the two highest levels in NAPLAN – than any other state. By contrast, the last time the coalition were in government they cut the maths and science coaching program which supported struggling schools with STEM. What we can attribute our fantastic NAPLAN results to – and again I do want to pay credit to the teachers who are leading the way in Victoria on these outcomes – are the benefits of the Allan Labor government's investments in best practice teaching and learning, including mandated phonics for 25 minutes each day and support to build kids' confidence in maths.

We know that the Victorian Labor government have handed down a budget that invests a further $1.6 billion in education infrastructure. If we look cumulatively, that is a total of $20.1 billion investment in building, upgrading and modernising schools since coming into government. By contrast, when they last had the chance the coalition scrapped the Victorian schools plan and failed to plan for the future of Victoria's education system. School infrastructure funding was cut to a mere $200 million a year. I should say, furthermore, what did that look like? Not one new school opened in 2016 following their failure to plan for the future. When Labor came into government the school infrastructure we inherited was a disaster, with only 14.1 per cent of school capital works projects being delivered on time. Since the 2017–18 financial year, each financial year has seen an average of 91.8 per cent of projects delivered on time by the Allan Labor government.

I can reflect on my electorate alone, and it is really fantastic. We have got South Melbourne Park Primary School, delivered by the Allan Labor government, and the South Melbourne Primary School, delivered by the Allan Labor government, and actually just announced is a further $23 million expansion to that school, such is, one, the popularity of the school but also the growth of people moving into the area and the demand for that school. We have Port Melbourne Secondary College, also

delivered by the Allan Labor government. This year, I should say, we have opened a record 19 new schools, delivering on our commitment to build 100 new schools by 2026. One of those is actually Narrarrang Primary School, which is in Fishermans Bend, and it is looking absolutely fantastic. I should say it also has a kindergarten onsite, so it saves that kind of double drop-off – really, really convenient. It is a fantastic looking school, but more importantly, it has the facilities that the kids need and also wonderful teachers who are leading the way. Certainly the literacy reforms are absolutely fantastic. Having witnessed them myself, I know of the extraordinary difference they do make and of the ability with these reforms to be able to intervene fast before kids fall through the gaps. That is what it is really about.

We are also on track to complete six new tech schools by 2026 thanks to our $116 million investment. These schools will deliver free hands-on STEM education for 62,000 Victorian students. That is absolutely impactful in terms of meeting the skills demand now and into the future, because we know there is demand in that space for well-qualified young Victorians to be able to build that pathway into the future for themselves. I just want to do a little shout-out to Port Melbourne Secondary College – oh, my goodness – having seen some of the robotics and other things going on there. These students blow your mind. But you know, they just expect it; I say that in the best sense. Again, it is a credit to their teachers. The 3D printing and so forth is absolutely brilliant, and it is really setting them up for great jobs and giving them so many opportunities. That is right in my area of Albert Park, but these tech schools are around the state. This is not specifically a tech school, but I am just saying that there is an emphasis on STEM and backing it in. By contrast, the Liberals were not really across that one – really, I do not know what was on their mind at the time – but anyway, we are backing it in, and that is what matters and this is what is at stake. This is the difference it can make between getting a job and not getting a job or getting the skills you need to get that right outcome. This is certainly something that is in the DNA of Labor. This is something we value because we know that education is absolutely essential in building a whole human being, from the whole perspective. On the one hand there is the academic element, but also making sure that students have a choice in terms of whether they want to go on to university, but on the other hand there is the vocational pathway, and it has really seen a significant uptake, making sure that they can really tap into their particular skills and build the pathway that they are best suited to and that is actually going to make them happy.

I should say that under Labor, schools are being built eight months faster on average. In fact roughly 50 per cent of the schools that have been built across the whole of Australia since 2018 have been built right here in Victoria by our government. That is no mean feat, and I do not want to take it for granted. For all the tradies that have helped deliver those fantastic schools, a credit and a shout-out to them. I know they work extremely hard. Certainly when I have visited some of the school sites locally I see the pride that they take in what they deliver, because they know that they are playing a role in the future of Victorian students, and that is something to be extraordinarily proud of, and the jobs that flow from that as well.

Labor is also making sure that the school facilities support everyone by unlocking them for after-hours community use. In Melbourne's west our investment in expanded community use for school facilities has seen 35 new community groups now using school facilities after hours, and we can see again this helps parents in juggling work and also making sure they are being there for their kids when they need them. Obviously there are many cost-of-living challenges that many families in Victoria are facing, but rest assured we have backed them in all the way in a number of different ways, such as the expanded school breakfast clubs to every government school that wants to be involved, helping the program to hit the milestone of more than 65 million free meals delivered since it began. Labor's free school breakfast clubs can save families $256 per child each year, and when you add up all the expenses that families have to handle, it really does matter.

Also, we expanded the Glasses for Kids program into an additional 330 schools, meaning it will reach 1100 schools. What are the absolute metrics of who has been impacted positively in terms of Victorian students? This program has delivered 13,000 pairs of free glasses, and as someone who has had to use

glasses since grade 3 in school, let me tell you it is the difference between being able to read and not being able to read, in many cases, subject to the extent of the challenges you might have with your eyes. I am speaking in layman's terms; I am not an optometrist – that is very evident. However, I can say from personal experience I was lucky enough to be able to have glasses, but I would hate to think about if I had not had that availed to me, and I certainly have compassion for Victorian students who might not have. I do not know how they would have battled through school without glasses. So this is a really terrific program, and it is something that parents can absolutely measure in terms of the cost savings but also making sure that their child does not fall through the gaps simply because they cannot read the book that is in front of them.

We increased the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund to $400, which supports more than 190,000 students to take part in incursions, excursions, school sporting events, camps and more. School camps, I say on a personal level, stay in your memory. You remember forever. They have a fantastic impact. On the one hand you are learning to gain that bit of independence. You get to try new things, to challenge yourself, and it is awful to think that anyone would miss out because their parents could not afford to send them on a camp. So this is making sure that Victorian kids get to take part in these important growth activities that help them really to build resilience and have fun at the same time. I should say, by contrast, when they had the opportunity, the coalition cut cost-of-living support for students and families like Free Fruit Friday and the young readers program. They also cut the $182 million School Start bonus, which provided a $300 one-off payment to help families cover the costs of starting school, and they cut the education maintenance allowance for disadvantaged students. This meant that the parents of disadvantaged primary school students lost more than $300 a year in cost-of-living support. We know there is no embellishment here. We can simply look at the facts as they stood and as they stand now in terms of what the Labor government is backing in, and they are really pragmatic supports that Victorians can actually see and that certainly make a real difference to households in Victoria.

We have also extended free travel to all families using the regional and rural school bus program and made uniforms cheaper by making unbranded shorts, pants, skirts and socks in Victorian government schools the standard to reduce uniform costs. Having done consultation on behalf of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, I know, having spoken to parents, that they are having to add up all these little costs that accumulatively can make a real difference in terms of how their child is able to present at school. These kinds of adjustments were led through direct consultation to get that honest feedback from parents, so it is very much informed by the community. It is just one of many measures that are backing in Victorian kids.

Government performance

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (17:30): I grieve for Victoria because of the corruption that has infiltrated this state, and it is interesting today that I have heard members from the other side talk about DNA. The problem with the Labor Party is that corruption is in their DNA. They cannot help it. Let us go back to 2014, when it all started, prior to the election. Prior to the election there was the red shirts scandal. Twenty-one MPs were implicated in that investigation – 21 MPs. That has set the standard for this government ever since. Ever since, this government has been dragged through inquiry after inquiry after inquiry. I think that this government should start using the term – and Deputy Speaker, with respect to you, I will not use that l-word today. I do not want to see your head explode, so I will keep that out of the conversation. But I think that the people on that side now should actually start using the phrase 'This is my truth.' They should use that phrase – not that this is necessarily factual or this is necessarily what actually happened, but now they just should use the phrase 'This is my truth.'

The member for Mordialloc got up earlier and spoke about people being honest and accountable. That was in his thing. To be honest, he probably should have taken his coat off. He was overheating at one stage. His head was getting redder and redder. I thought, 'Jeez, it must be hot in there.' But 'honest' and 'accountable' – those are two words the government has probably failed on, in my opinion. When I talked about the red shirts just earlier – it took four years to do the investigation into red shirts, and it

ended up being that they defrauded the Victorian taxpayer of $388,000, which they had to pay back. But they did nothing wrong. If you had to pay the money back, I am pretty sure you did something wrong, and the investigation found that. It could not be referred on, because IBAC did not have the powers after that to deal with what they had put through. But this government set the tone right back in 2014 about their trustworthiness and what they were going to do for Victoria and how they have misled Victorians over the last nearly 12 years.

There has been no bigger fraud or case of misleading than the Commonwealth Games. What a classic stuff-up that was. Seriously, they came out prior to the 2022 elections: 'We're going to have a Commonwealth Games around regional Victoria.' They knew they could never deliver it. They knew that. It was logistically impossible to deliver those games around regional Victoria. Whoever's brainchild that was – and I do not know whether it was the former Premier or someone else, but honestly – they obviously had a brain fade, because that was never going to happen. But even when we got to the cancellation of the games, they were untruthful. They misled Victorians. When the figure came out – and I remember sitting in the chamber here – it was $7 billion. 'We have to cancel' scribbled on a bit of paper that long and that big by the then Premier Daniel Andrews – '$7 billion – we have to cancel the Commonwealth Games.' And I remember yelling out at the time, 'Show us the quotes.' Then it came out later that that figure was fabricated. It was doubled to justify the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, and what ended up happening to Victorians? It has cost us $589 million to have those games hosted in another country. Glasgow are laughing. They got the Commonwealth Games for nothing off the back of the Victorian taxpayer.

This is the problem with the government: every time they do not tell the truth or every time they are not accountable for their actions it costs the Victorian taxpayers money. Even in the contributions I have been listening to today, they are not truthful. They are fabricated – not all, but some – and this is the problem. For the government, as I said, it is in their DNA. I think it was the member for Pascoe Vale who once quoted *Seinfeld*: 'It's not a … if you believe it.' I think that is what has happened with members on that side. They just keep believing the story they want to put out into the media, so they are not accountable and they are not honest and they are not transparent – far from it.

When we have got a Premier that was at the centre of the infrastructure build in this state and then denies any knowledge of the corruption and the $15 billion that this state lost, I find it hard to believe. I think Victorians find it hard to believe. I can remember the interview by Nick McKenzie. It was a press conference with Nick McKenzie, and he brought up a document. The Premier, to be honest, sounded like a two-stroke lawnmower: 'But, but, but, but have you got that document?' Yes, he did. The funny thing was the Premier had stated time and time and again, 'I always refer it on,' but that document had been there for 12 months. That was not referred on. I do not think the Premier was being honest with Victorians when she said, 'Every time I found out I referred it on.' I do not think that is true. I do not think Victorians think it is true, because you cannot let $15 billion walk out the door and not have any investigation into it.

Now the Premier says, 'We're cleaning up the industry. We're using every lever.' And I think I keep hearing quotes: 'We've cancelled 151 labour hire companies' licences.' Great job. Do you know what that tells me, though? If the government has cancelled 151 labour hire company licences, how much corruption was in there that we have ignored for the last decade? That is a problem. That is a massive problem when the government states, 'We've cancelled this many licences' – only because Nick McKenzie from the *Age* brought it to light for the Victorian public. 'We've now cancelled 151 licences' – that is the level of corruption that this state has, and it is not over. It is far from over. We have not cleaned up the CFMEU. Yes, it is in administration, but the corruption is still there. For the government to turn a blind eye to that for the best part of a decade really makes them complicit in the corruption. If the government are aware of something that is costing the Victorian taxpayer money and they ignore the problem, the government might as well have done it themselves. You cannot ignore that level of corruption for so long and then just claim, 'Well, we're cleaning everything up.' That is not right, because every dollar wasted, every dollar that has gone to a bikie, every dollar that

has gone to a drug dealer, a standover man – whatever – a sex offender or a stripper, could have gone to something else. It could have gone to the West Gippsland Hospital. That would have been a nice little chestnut for me. But no. It could have gone anywhere.

A member interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: I would not start mouthing off about the hospital on that side of the chamber if I was them. They know very little about it. They know very little about the commitment, and probably hardly any of them have ever been there, so I am happy to take up the interjections and debate the West Gippsland Hospital if they want to. And this is my point: every time corruption is ignored, it costs someone – not just the taxpayer but the service, a frontline service.

The member for Tarneit actually got up earlier and stated, 'We're cut from the same cloth.' Well, to be honest, Labor is cut from the same cloth at the federal and state levels. Albanese said, 'For the 50th time, I'm not going to do anything about negative gearing and capital gains tax.' What did he do?

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I ask that you counsel the member on his feet to use the appropriate titles for members of Parliament, including the Prime Minister.

Matthew Guy: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, we have just heard previous Labor speakers referring to the former Premier Jeff Kennett as just Kennett. If you are going to counsel any members in this chamber, can I also ask you to counsel government members on the appropriate usage for former premiers?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Wayne FARNHAM: I will refer to people in this chamber by their proper titles or those in the other place, but if they are not in this chamber, I do not care. Talk about being cut from the same cloth.

Members interjecting.

Matthew Guy: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, respectfully, members on this side of the chamber heard the last number of Labor speakers in silence. They were given that respect. The member for Narracan has been constantly interrupted for the second part of his presentation. I ask you to bring the government members back to order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: All members should be heard in silence. Interjections are disorderly. The member to continue without assistance.

Wayne FARNHAM: My point is that the state Labor Party and the federal Labor Party are cut from the same cloth. They mislead the public and they are not honest with the public, and at the end of the day the public pays for it. There have been so many investigations into this government – Operation Watts and Operation Daintree. Operation Richmond – we are still waiting for that to see the light of day. It is tied up at the moment. There is no bigger rort than the CFMEU and the Big Build. There is no bigger rort. Even Women in Construction – their behaviour has been abhorrent. The government gets up and virtue signals all the time but does not do anything about it. The issues with Women in Construction are still going on today.

The Victorian people have had enough. I have had enough. Everyone has had enough. The Victorian public does not believe this government anymore. They just do not. Whatever this government says, the Victorian public now rolls its eyes and thinks, 'Here we go again.' It is the same story, but there is no result. 'We are doing everything we can' – but the government does not do that. The Premier has nearly flat-out denied that there is any corruption on Big Build sites, has denied that the figure is $15 billion. That is okay. Have an investigation into it to find out how much it is. It is pretty simple: if there is an allegation made – where there is smoke, there is fire; there always is – have an investigation into it and find out how much money it was and who is implicated. I would hope and pray that no-one from government is implicated, or I would hope no department heads are implicated or anyone within this precinct.

We need the investigation into the corruption to clear up the rumour and innuendo, if you will. Members on that side always shout at us: 'It's not true. It's not true. It's not true.' The government is not doing anything to find out the truth, and that is the problem the Victorian people are having. Every time I go out and talk to people, they go, 'Can you find the $15 billion?' That is the one thing they say. It is constant. Even on the government members' own social media sites – I guarantee government members read their social media – they would see the same comments as well. People are asking, 'Where is our $15 billion?' The member for Laverton has probably seen it on her social media as well.

Sarah Connolly interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: Maybe the member for Laverton should read her comments, because then she will get an idea of what the Victorian public is thinking. That is the problem with the government. The member for Laverton is a classic example of the attitude of the government: you bury your head in the sand and ignore the issue. That is why we have got the corruption. That is why we have massive debt and a massive interest bill, and that is why the government needs to be honest and accountable, as the member for Mordialloc stated. It is not a hard thing to do. Why don't you try and break the perception of a dishonest government? Why don't you start telling the truth? Why doesn't the government start telling the truth, rather than saying, 'This is my truth'?

Opposition performance

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (17:45): I cannot hold back. I am just so excited to stand up here tonight to participate in this grievance debate. I wholeheartedly grieve for Victorians, particularly people in my community in Melbourne's west. The previous speaker from over there likes to follow along the epic Labor stories in Melbourne's west, but I grieve for people in my community whose lives, let us face it, would be a whole lot worse off if those opposite, with their plans for deep, vicious cuts to services and infrastructure, were elected to govern in November.

Just a few weekends ago Victorians got to see the difference. They got to see the difference between our Labor government and those opposite, how we approach government, what we fight for and, most importantly, what we believe in. The Premier, at our state conference, spoke about opportunity. She spoke about helping more young Victorians into jobs, announcing 2000 electrician apprenticeships that will be offered through the SEC. Those are 2000 jobs and opportunities particularly for young people. That same weekend – I feel like it was the same day – those opposite had a little bit of a conference of their own. What did they talk about? They talked about cuts to regional schools in Victoria.

I thought this was particularly interesting because I spent a bit of time recently, as the chair of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, listening to budget estimates as we undertook the public inquiry into the Victorian state budget, and the Nationals and Liberal Party members on that committee asked a lot of questions about regional Victoria and school funding in regional Victoria. I have to say, when I heard about the cuts that they intend to make to regional schools in Victoria, I thought they really did not listen to one single answer that was provided to them, nor did they understand the evidence that was being given to them. Cuts to regional schools in Victoria are telling for a number of reasons about those opposite and what is in their DNA. We all know that if they are openly talking about cuts to the regions, those cuts will be even more savage in Melbourne and in Melbourne's west.

Nowhere will they be felt more keenly than in my community in the district of Laverton. We have already seen a little bit – just a little something, a preview – of what those cuts might look like, and I have got to tell you that it does not look good. It is just so great to have the member for Bulleen here. He would remember when he was on ABC radio and he said really proudly – and I remember he was really proud, because I was having a cup of tea at the time and I burnt my mouth because I thought he had made an error, but he has not corrected that error – that he would remove trains from the Wyndham Vale line and the Melton line and he would divert them to the Warrnambool and Traralgon lines. I burnt my mouth. I was listening so closely. It was just extraordinary. 'Excess services' he called them, and he admitted, which I thought was unbelievable, that it would leave these lines thin.

Those opposite have always talked a big game about Melbourne's west. Their history, however, will tell you exactly what they delivered for Melbourne's west, and that was nothing. It was cuts and it was closures. The member for Tarneit was right. During his contribution he talked about their time in government and how it was a time of tremendous growth in Wyndham. And what did they do? Absolutely nothing. Well, the member for Bulleen did something at the eleventh hour; he signed off 11 precinct structure plans, which are still being finished off in Wyndham as I speak. So part of the huge amount of problems we experience in Wyndham are certainly thanks to the member for Bulleen. I know it is a sore point for him. I know it is a sore point. They have also tried to make inroads in our communities, and each time they fail, things like this are why. I would say to the member for Bulleen –

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bulleen will compose himself. I am on my feet. When the house comes to order, the member for Laverton to continue.

Sarah CONNOLLY: The member for Bulleen has had plenty of opportunity to get back on radio and correct the record, but he has not done that, so I stand by my comments here – that is exactly what they intend to do. But what I would say to the member for Bulleen and the thousands of people that catch that service on the Wyndham Vale line – they know that is not an excess service. They are critical capacity supports so that folks and families on the Wyndham Vale line and on the Melton line can better access train services to the city, because that is where people are working at the moment. There is a raft of work being done to enable electrification, like the Sunshine station superhub, which we are delivering as part of Melbourne Airport rail. But we are not waiting for these works to be done and finished before doing anything – we have just announced we are going to be upgrading the Melton line. The $650 million is going into expanding platforms and getting the line ready for those bigger, longer trains that we know we are desperate for. We have just funded more of those – and I love this; I think this is such a great thing that came through the budget – really important nine-car carriage V/Line trains for the Wyndham Vale line. Every time someone in Wyndham sees these trains go past, we count the carriages. There are going to be more nine-car carriage trains than ever before during the peak times, morning and afternoon, and they have an extra 50 per cent capacity. For folks in the outer west, that is the difference between being able to get on a train or not. That is the difference between being able to get a seat or not.

We know that more works need to be done. The member for Bulleen said, apparently, folks in Wyndham can do without it. So if you are living in Melbourne's outer west, if you are living in Werribee or if you are living in Tarneit, Melton or Caroline Springs, not only do those opposite want to fast-track and dump tens of thousands of homes in our local communities out on the urban fringes – where we are already doing our heavy lifting; we do not need more homes out there – but they also want to keep their own suburbs free from new housing. They are even talking now about taking away our train services – that is just how crazy this is.

But I want to go back to the Sunshine superhub for a minute and the work that we are delivering as part of Melbourne Airport rail, including station upgrades at Albion and Tottenham stations. Albion and Tottenham stations are old stations, and they are not looking so great at the moment. They need a facelift, although the Minister for Transport Infrastructure says to me it is more than a facelift and it is more than a glow-up. For both Tottenham and Albion stations, they are entire rebuilds of those stations. Like I said, they are really old stations. People have really wanted an upgrade for a very long time, and that is exactly what is going to be delivered as part of Melbourne Airport rail.

Alarm bells were ringing just over a year ago because those opposite were in lockstep with the federal Liberal Party, who wanted to cut more than $1 billion from this project, which was just extraordinary. I remember when Peter Dutton – I know we do not mention his name too often here anymore – announced during the federal election that he was going to cut the Sunshine superhub from Melbourne Airport rail. This would have meant that no extra platforms would be built, no major transport interchange would be built, and it would have set back any electrification works for decades and

decades. It would also have meant that there would be no Tottenham station rebuild either. But it does make one wonder – and I know folks in Melbourne's west should wonder – whether the Leader of the Opposition and her new team plan to make cuts to our Sunshine superhub. What will that mean for Albion station and Tottenham station? Will they finally get the rebuild that people need and, more importantly, deserve?

When you have plans to cut $40 billion in services and infrastructure, nothing and no-one is actually safe. When they were last in government, public spending on public transport infrastructure projects was slashed by more than 66 per cent. That is more than half. That is why, when we came to government in 2014, the cupboards were bare. There were no plans, there were no projects and there were no visions to take up and continue along with. It is why we have done the heavy lifting here in this state for the last 12 years, building the big transport infrastructure projects that are going to be transformational, not just for Melbourne but for Victoria, and not just for folks living here now but for generations to come, generations that are not even born yet. But those opposite, the last time they were in government, slashed that spending by 66 per cent. When you cut and when you de-scope and water down these types of projects, you do not get better service delivery; you get issues that need to be fixed up again and again further down the track.

This approach is not just limited to transport infrastructure projects. They have said they will cut spending to regional schools. You just know that our schools in Wyndham – the many, many schools that we have been able to build and upgrade and schools still needing to be upgraded – will also cop cuts. As we on this side of the house know, the Leader of the Opposition went on Sky after dark – she never struck me as the type to appear on Sky after dark, but you never know that about a Liberal, and she did it right after taking the leadership – and said schools are not going to be built or even fixed under a government she leads. Folks in Melbourne's west know what that impact would be when you have schools still needing to be upgraded and more schools needing to be built.

We built, and we have delivered, more than 100 new schools across Victoria. I think we were actually at about 120 or 121 last I checked. That is across Victoria, and that is just over the past eight years alone. That is extraordinary. At the same time – I cannot believe I am even reading this – does anyone remember what those opposite promised? They promised to build four schools. Can you believe that? Four schools – we have built over 100 in eight years. Of the four schools they promised to build in Victoria none were earmarked or scheduled for Melbourne's west. Even as the member for Bulleen signed off, at the eleventh hour, on 11 precinct structure plans in Wyndham, not one school was earmarked for Wyndham. They may not be nasty people, but what I will say to the community is that they just do not understand. They do not get it. They do not understand the needs of communities like ours. They do not know what we need, and they certainly will never deliver what we deserve. All they know how to do is cut. They cut deeply, and they cut the services that folks like mine rely upon.

You cannot cut $40 billion without making cuts to schools and making cuts to hospitals. And you cannot cut $40 billion without sacking frontline workers. You cannot tell me that you can achieve that in less than six years by not making cuts to frontline services. It simply cannot be done. To make those cuts, folks need to realise you would have to cut one in seven public servants – everything from healthcare workers, teachers and education staff to child protection officers. When they were last in government, 4128 public sector jobs were cut in a period of just two years. These cuts would be more savage and see thousands and thousands of Victorians lose their jobs. People cannot afford to lose their jobs in a cost-of-living crisis. They absolutely cannot afford that. This is not a plan for a better Victoria. Those opposite have had plenty of time to come up with a plan for a better Victoria, to give people opportunity, to have a vision that promotes a positive Victoria. They have spent 12 years here in this place talking down this great state of ours. So I grieve for my local community because if those opposite ever have the privilege of coming into government, especially this coming November, it is folks in the western suburbs, particularly in the outer west, that would suffer most from cuts – cuts to services, cuts to schools, cuts to hospitals and cuts to jobs. I wholeheartedly grieve for my community.

Question agreed to.

Bills

Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (18:00): I was interrupted for grievance while I was talking about the part of the bill that doubles the donation cap to $15,000 for new entrants and the need to level the playing field and give new entrants a leg-up to be able to start a campaign before they receive public funding. Some will feel that for that balance between incumbents and new entrants, this bill does not get that balance right, and I acknowledge that and I acknowledge the difficulty in getting the balance right. That is one of the reasons why the Greens insisted on a comprehensive review to properly examine that issue, and we are very open to looking at other models. But as part of our talks with the government over this bill, the Labor government would not entertain any other models in this legislation because they wanted to pick up part 12 and then put it back in the legislation with as few changes as possible to get it done quickly. That is what they told us. We did put forward other models, but unfortunately they were not entertained.

The bill also reinstates disclosure requirements for donations because transparency around donations is very important in a democracy, and the level that is required to disclose the donation will remain the same as in the previous laws, so no anonymous donations can be received above a total of $1250, and the bill finally will ban foreign donations, which the Greens strongly support. It also tidies up some confusing elements relating to third parties who are engaging in legitimate campaigning activities and enabling them to do so, which is important and something that has been put to us by community groups that I thought was very important to tidy up as well.

One of the really important things about this bill is that donation caps and disclosure will be retrospective, meaning that any donations that were taken above the cap since the High Court decision was handed down in this period where we have had no donations laws will have to be paid back, with criminal penalties for not doing so. This provision means that Labor, the Liberals and the Nationals will also have to pay back any money drawn out of their nominated entities from the date of the High Court decision whether it has been spent or not.

I also want to talk about what the alternative was to this legislation. The Liberals wanted a donation cap so high that it would be almost meaningless and allow tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands or more of dollars to flow into their coffers. That is true – the Liberals wanted a donation cap that was significantly higher than we have in this bill, and this would be fundamentally undemocratic and significantly advantage people who have huge amounts of wealth and enable them to influence elections while ordinary people just do not have the same power and influence. Fundamentally, the Greens believe that money should not decide the outcome of elections; voters should.

There was a lot of commentary in the press since the High Court case about the Liberals not wanting a system that was retrospective.

James Newbury interjected.

Ellen SANDELL: Well, there was commentary about that in the media – that is true – and the Liberals wanting to be allowed to continue to take money out of their political slush fund for their political spending. That kind of scenario is just unacceptable. Ultimately, though, this bill was needed because Labor made a mess of the previous laws by trying to keep special rules for themselves and for the coalition parties. But this is a temporary fix to fix the current bleeding and to ensure that we have donation caps and political donation laws for the state election this year.

That is fundamentally why this is being brought to us. But there is no doubt that these laws are not perfect, and we proposed several suggestions to Labor which they would not entertain as part of these

laws. It will be on Labor if they are challenged successfully in the High Court or not. They are the ones who designed these laws. We believe that the Electoral Act 2002 needs a rewrite and it needs proper scrutiny, which is why we have insisted on a timely and comprehensive legislative review which is baked into the laws.

The kinds of things that the Greens believe need to be included in our laws and in a review are not just caps on donations but also caps on campaign spending to end this escalating political arms race where people feel like they have to spend more and more to outdo their opposition. I do not think that that benefits Victorians at all. Spending caps are easier to monitor, they are harder to sidestep, they help level the playing field and minimise the advantages of incumbency. New South Wales, Queensland, the ACT and many countries all have electoral expenditure caps, so why can't we have them too? There are also other gaps that need fixing, like candidates being able to spend unlimited amounts on their own campaigns, people being potentially able to donate multiple times under multiple entities and a few other issues we have raised with the government which they would not fix in these laws but absolutely need to be fixed.

As I spoke of earlier, the system should also look at ways to ensure fairness between all players and candidates in the system. Independents, challengers, new entrants, incumbents and political parties, they should all be on a level playing field to ensure our elections are truly democratic. There are models already in use in democracies around the world to ensure that this is the case which we could look into. Some have already been presented to the government, like a model where public funding is perhaps provided in advance to new entrants if they reach a genuine threshold of community support in small donations. This is similar to a model that they have in New York – a little bit different because our election system is fundamentally different here, but they do have a model like that that we could take potentially some elements from. I know the Centre for Public Integrity has mentioned this model that they also have in some US states of a donations voucher system where the public can decide where they want those public funding vouchers to go – which parties and candidates they want them to go to. There are other models that various people and organisations have suggested. I think they should all be looked at.

With these laws, the Labor government was simply not interested in looking at these options because it would need a significant rewrite of the bill. We understand that something quickly was needed to stem the flow of big political donations happening right now. But a proper rewrite would leave us with better laws and should be done as soon as possible.

The Greens believe that we should also go further and introduce truth in political advertising laws and other integrity measures that would significantly improve our democracy, such as an independent means of funding our integrity agencies to ensure a process where the chairs and membership of Victoria's parliamentary investigative committees are non-government, including the Electoral Matters Committee. We think that the chairs of those committees should be independent of the government of the day. These are things that we have put to the government many times and had them rejected.

Something that is I think incredibly important and is raised with me by constituents all the time is the need to apply donation caps and laws to council candidates and councillors as well. The Greens have long said that donations to council candidates in this state in Victoria are still uncapped. They are unlimited, and they are still allowed from clearly conflicted interested parties like property developers. Labor refuses to change this system. They blatantly refuse to do it.

The Greens also believe that there are certain actors whose actions are so damaging to society and the planet that their money should have no place in our electoral system, and that includes dodgy donations from the gambling industry, property development industry and fossil fuel industries where their actions either are damaging to our future or seek to very unfairly influence the outcome of elections. We have seen the case where, for example, property developers have sought to line the pockets of the major parties in order to get favourable outcomes to increase their profits. I do not think that that kind

of money should be allowed in politics. We have already seen in my electorate, in the City of Melbourne, the millions of dollars that were donated to the mayoral campaign of mayor Nick Reece – property developers and corporations who donated to the mayor of Melbourne. What did they get in return for their donations? I think that is a very legitimate question that Victorians should be asking. We may never know, but they did not give those donations for no reason. It is dodgy, it smells, it needs to change.

Obviously, in conclusion, it would have been a lot better and saved a lot of unnecessary pain if the Labor government had changed these laws eight years ago, in 2018, and not included such problematic elements as the carve-outs for the major parties' slush funds. Instead they created an inherently flawed model, which directly led to the mess that we are in today. This cause of this mess is the Labor government, but the Greens will be supporting this temporary solution to keep big money out of politics, and we urge also all parties to support a rewrite to properly interrogate all of the other options to improve our democracy as soon as possible.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (18:11): I rise to speak in support of the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026. In my contribution I would just like to take a bit of a different approach and take a step back from the focus of what we have really been paying regard to today, because this bill really is about democracy. It goes to the very foundations and essence of what it means to live in a free, democratic society, country and state. Democracy is something that we should not ever take for granted. It is something that is fragile. It is something that we all have a role to play in protecting, defending, preserving and sustaining. And it is something that has not come about by accident. It is something that has come about by centuries and thousands of years, arguably, of service, sacrifice and contributions of people from across public life and various parts of our community.

On Anzac Day this year I gave a speech that I would like to touch on and I believe is very relevant to this bill, because we would not be here today in this democracy of Australia and indeed Victoria if it was not for the service and the sacrifice of our veterans community. They first served us as a nation as the Anzacs combined forces at the Gallipoli landings on the shores of Türkiye in Gallipoli, Çanakkale. Twenty thousand Australians served in Gallipoli; 9000 lost their lives. I had the privilege to visit Gallipoli as part of the Victorian parliamentary delegation a couple of years ago to pay tribute and homage to the veterans from my community. There were at least 60 that we could identify that came from the suburbs of Coburg and Brunswick, made the ultimate sacrifice and remain buried on the shores of Türkiye. They fought to protect democracy, and so too did all the other veterans who have put up their hand to serve this country through subsequent conflicts and peacekeeping operations. Democracy came under attack again of course in World War II, through Nazi Germany, through the rise of hate and through the rise of vilification and violence against innocent people based on their religion, faith or culture. It was Western democratic forces that came together to push back and fight against Nazi Germany, liberate Europe and indeed free the world.

But of course, as we fast-forward to today, you can basically argue that democracy is very much under attack again, in new ways and like never before. Autocracy is very much on the rise around the world. Just look around us in any corner of the world. Look at what is happening in Ukraine with the aggression happening there and Russia continuing to attack the independent sovereign Ukraine and not seeking to withdraw. Look at what is happening in Iran. Just earlier today I was very pleased to welcome a delegation from the Iranian Women's Association and local Iranian Persian community led by Nosrat Hosseini, who briefed us members about the ongoing suppression, violence and persecution that innocent Iranians are suffering at the hands of the violent fundamentalist Islamic regime that still remains there today. Look at what is happening in North Korea, where people continue to be persecuted and are not able to speak out against Kim Jong Un and his fundamentalist communist regime as well. Look at what is happening in Russia, where political opponents are still jailed and opposition leaders were previously jailed as well.

The point is that democracy, as I say, does not happen by accident, and as we look around the world it is increasingly under attack, not just in traditional political ways but in new technological ways. We

should not be letting the algorithm, for example, determine and be the only substantive influence in terms of how people think and how they are influenced to vote. Obviously there are a lot of positives with AI, but there are a lot of challenges when it comes to the political sphere. Look at the rise in misinformation, disinformation and fake news. We have a lot to be wary of and to fight and push back against as a community, as a state and as a country when it comes to protecting and preserving our democracy. That is what in many ways this bill at a state level is about, because we are a country that is proudly democratic. People have the right in Australia and in Victoria to think, feel and vote however they like, to believe in a god or not believe in a god that they choose to worship or not.

At a state level there is so much we can control in this space in the political environment. One of the most fundamental spaces of public policy we can have a meaningful say in is through donation laws, because it is through donation laws that we can sustain, to a large degree, the integrity, the transparency and the public confidence in our voting and democratic system in this state. In 2018 – and this is why we are here today – the original intent of the laws that were moved and passed here was to protect our democracy at a state level through the introduction of what really at the time were nation-leading reforms around donation caps, thresholds, declarations, reforms to nominated entities, public funding and increased transparency. But in saying that we cannot ignore the decision of the High Court. That is why we are here today to again update and modernise these laws as soon as possible following on from that High Court decision. The High Court's decision struck down Victoria's longstanding electoral integrity laws, leaving our state exposed to dark money in politics. Right now money could be flowing, in the absence of these laws as they have been struck down, from foreign billionaires into political party bank accounts with no limits, no disclosures and no oversight. The government, through this bill that is before us now, is immediately moving to restore Victoria's electoral integrity regime within the limits of the High Court ruling, and we cannot allow anyone to exploit this current period to solicit huge donations and move money around secretly. Our legislation is designed to make sure that every party and every candidate will be accountable for every dollar they receive from this date forward, which was the intent of the original legislation that was passed.

We know the Liberals are fighting and opposing these changes, because they want to keep taking advantage of the void of legislation that is in place at the moment. They have got the Cormack Foundation, which we know has $130 million sitting in it that they want to continue to access and grow for their own political advantage. They want to continue bringing in the money, with no checks and balances, from big business, from their billionaire mates and, who knows, even from people overseas.

I have the High Court decision here, which I have gone through – and it could not be any clearer – from 15 April. They said in their statement:

> Today, the High Court unanimously answered questions of law stated for its consideration in the special case to the effect that Pt 12 of the *Electoral Act 2002* –

here in Victoria –

> … is invalid because that Part, operating with "the nominated entity exception" in para (j) of the definition of "gift" in s 206(1) of the *Electoral Act*, impermissibly burdens the implied freedom of political communication, contrary to the Commonwealth *Constitution*.

That was the decision. That is what we have to accept, and that is what we have to now respond to with these new laws. But we know the Liberals are not the best when it comes to engaging and respecting and responding to court decisions, because they have been tied up in court cases amongst themselves for the last couple of years and indeed have been utilising donor money from the Liberals to sustain and fund those court cases.

Members interjecting.

Anthony CIANFLONE: I have hit a nerve there, because that is exactly where we are going to. The Liberals have been utilising funding from the Liberal Party to sustain and fund matters relating to

their own legal cases amongst themselves – defamation cases. We know the Liberal executive is pursuing this legal matter still, seeking further funding from the Liberal fundraising account to sustain further appeals. We know that for a fact. I draw the house's attention to an article by Shannon Deery in the *Herald Sun* on 28 May. The subheading is 'Hopes for pre-election peace deal fade as Victorian Liberal Party infighting rages'. The article states:

> A $1m legal bill has emerged as a potential roadblock to hopes the Victorian Liberal Party can shut down a looming Supreme Court battle that risks derailing its election campaign.
>
> The party is at war with itself in the Supreme Court over the controversial $1.55m rescue loan paid to former leader –

the member for Hawthorn –

> … Members of the party state executive have launched an unprecedented Supreme Court action over the validity of the loan, paid by the party's investment arm Vapold …

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

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): The member is within the parameters of the debate, I believe.

A member interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Is that a reflection on the Chair?

A member: No.

Anthony CIANFLONE: I am literally going to the very essence of what this bill is related to, which is donor money, political party fundraising money, and how it is being deployed and used. That is the essence of this bill. We are seeking to minimise caps and increase transparency, and as part of that it is important, given the Liberal Party are opposing this bill, to call out and to understand the reasons why they are opposing the merits of this bill. I am arguing and putting to the house that it has a lot to do with the way in which they are utilising their own fundraising money for legal purposes, not campaign purposes. Again, the Shannon Deery article goes to that very, very eloquently, and I encourage everyone to have a look at that if they get the chance.

Basically, our changes under these new laws will cap donations at $7500 over four years, with an interim cap of $5030 for the 2026 period. All foreign donations will be banned, anonymous donations above $1250 will be prohibited, donations of $1250 or more must be disclosed in real time and new candidates and parties will be able to receive double the standard cap to get a foothold. Essentially, this is about integrity and transparency and strengthening our democracy and voting system.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (18:21): I rise to make a contribution around the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026. We have spent a fair bit of time in here today talking about process and procedures, and there are, frankly, very sound reasons for having had to do that. This is a bill that has been brought on in a very, very big rush, so it is unsurprising that we have had a debate about the way in which the bill was introduced and had a debate about for how long the debate on the bill will occur. It has all arisen, yes, because of a High Court decision, and the government needs to respond to that. But if the government are going to bring changes as substantial as this to the chamber, it is incumbent upon them to, one, make the case for change in a way that is clear and compelling and provide the supporting evidence, the data and those things that have brought them to this position.

I have learned over the course of today that the solicitor-general's advice, upon which the government relies, has been made available to minor parties and has been made available to crossbenchers in the other place but has not been made available to me – I do not know if it has been made available to the opposition or not – even to review. It seems to me churlish in the extreme that the government would withhold that advice from people who are being asked to cast a vote in this place.

I find myself, perhaps for the first time in my time in this place, particularly on the crossbench, actually torn between three options. Quite validly I could vote against this legislation because it seems to me to be rushed and to contain substantial flaws. Quite validly I could abstain because we have only had the bill for a few hours and have not had the benefit of seeing the fundamental, expert constitutional legal advice that supports the bill. Without that I quite validly could abstain and not actually form a view about it because we have not been given any of the things that we would ordinarily require to be able to form a view and to cast a vote. Unlike perhaps others in this place, I cast every single vote like it is the determinative vote. The votes that I cast represent my actual view on the topic at hand, and I cast them like they would actually affect the outcome, even though clearly they do not. Or I could vote in favour of the bill, and I am obviously under pressure to do that, because one of the provisions of this bill re-enlivens the administrative funding under which some of my staff are employed. So I either vote for the bill, save my staff and reward bad behaviour or vote against the bill, do not reward bad behaviour and punish my staff. It is an unenviable position that the government has put me and others in, and it is profoundly unfair.

The process has been completely tortured. There has been no meaningful engagement. Despite some of the weasel words from government members over the course of the past couple of days, there has been no meaningful engagement. I am grateful for the couple of briefings that I have received, but I am very, very disappointed at the offhand way in which, on my pretty simple request to actually look at the constitutional legal advice that underpins this legislation and to even review it, I have been told to go stick it. It is disappointing that we find ourselves in this circumstance. As I said, I have not made a decision yet, but I could go any one of three ways quite validly. There are good reasons to vote against, there are good reasons to abstain and there are good reasons – not policy reasons necessarily, but good reasons in terms of protecting the welfare of my staff – to support the bill.

So what is in it? It reintroduces a whole bunch of matters that I supported when changes to the Electoral Act 2002 were put through this place. Those are things I still support: increasing transparency, strengthening disclosure requirements and regulating political donations and re-establishing that framework around that. They are all good, important and sensible goals. My concern, though, is that of course this is a response to a High Court decision that, like all common law, does not lay out an alternative statute that Parliament ought to adopt but simply lays out a set of opinions of the majority about what they consider the implied freedom of political communication to allow and not allow. The implied freedom of political communication I first studied, I think, in 2003. That is a basket of constitutional rights that has gone up and down with time. It has moved left; it has moved right. It is probably one of the least settled parts of constitutional law in Australia, and that is not least because it is, as the name tells you, implied. It is merely implied by the system of government that we have that there is in fact freedom of political communication, and that freedom of political communication flows in a derivative sense from the constitution through to acts propagated by the states. In those circumstances it is more important than ever to have access to the legal advice that underpins where the government has landed on this, and it is churlish, rude, dismissive and frankly outrageous that the government is sharing only with selected members of Parliament, not all members of Parliament, what that advice actually says.

There are some good changes being contemplated here, and as I said, I support anything that is going to allow my staff to keep their jobs. But we also have a real risk I think of this all being knocked off again and the very real risk of matters coming before the High Court prior to the election, and it will all be off once more. That would be, obviously, unfortunate. There was a recent podcast with Stephen Donnelly and David Feeney as well as the former deputy chief of staff to Daniel Andrews, Jessie McCrone, where they were talking about this particular issue, and Stephen Donnelly said it was a mess and that Gavin Jennings had one job. Jessie McCrone said some would argue his one job was to get it through Parliament, and he did, but it was not in a constitutional way. David Feeney said he did not think anyone could anticipate that the High Court was going to set the whole legislation aside in the way that it did, and Jessie McCrone said she would put him in touch with someone who maintains that they have said this the whole time. So the deputy chief of staff to the Premier had advice that the

original bill was unconstitutional and was going to get knocked off by the High Court, and wowee, it happened. The Premier's private office knew about the risks, and they still put up the legislation. There is a very real chance that it is all going to happen again.

But we will not know what those risks are without seeing the expert constitutional advice. Plenty of people in this chamber have been freely giving out so-called expert constitutional legal advice over the course of this debate. Not one of them is a seasoned constitutional lawyer. We have got a seasoned constitutional lawyer; that person is the solicitor-general. But the government are only sharing that advice with their mates or whoever they consider might want to see it. I doubt they have shared it with the backbench. They are obviously not sharing it with me. They have shared it with the Greens. Well, it is churlish in the extreme and is not the way to conduct the orderly business of this chamber – a rushed bill, no advice being shared and a truncated debate. As I said, we only got the bill a few hours ago when the second reading happened.

There are real dilemmas for those of us amid a paucity of information and in a flawed process who have the competing tensions of wanting to ensure that staff whose jobs have been imperilled are allowed to retain those jobs and who support the principles of this legislation but do not support being treated in such an appalling fashion by the Premier's staff and do not support this truncated process that has been brought through the chamber. The advisers can sit in the corner of this chamber and snigger and laugh at me as much as they bloody well like, but frankly it is a bit too much. If they have the great privilege of sitting inside this chamber, they should be moderating their expressions and their interaction with members of this chamber.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Just tone it down, member for Ringwood.

Will FOWLES: They are members of staff; they are not members of Parliament. They should not be interacting with members in the chamber in this way.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Member for Ringwood, I ask you to come back to the debate, please.

Will FOWLES: On a point of order, Chair, I would ask that you ask advisers sitting in this chamber to keep their facial expressions to themselves rather than reacting to what is going on on the floor. They are not members of Parliament. They have no right to be engaging with members of Parliament in that way. If you want to engage with members of Parliament in that way, you do it out the front.

Nick Staikos: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would ask you to direct the member to stop bullying staff.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Member for Ringwood, I think if we can come back to the debate –

Will FOWLES: Have you ruled on the point of order?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): This is my ruling on the point of order. If you can come back to the debate without the gesticulation towards certain people, I think that would be helpful.

Will FOWLES: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I ask specifically that you direct staff not to engage with members of Parliament when sitting in this chamber.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): That is something you are welcome to raise with the Speaker in her office.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (18:31): I rise to make a contribution here on the Electoral Further Amendment Bill 2026. I commence by reminding everyone that since 15 April 2026 we have not had legislation in this state protecting donations law, so when there are those contributing who are concerned about a quick timeframe, I submit that they would be the first to be shouting if this took any longer than it did. Time is of the essence to get this legislation in and ensure that we have legislation

which is fit for purpose. What is the purpose? It is to ensure integrity and transparency in our electoral process. It is to ensure that our democracy remains strong, robust and intact, and the way to do that is to ensure that big money, dark money and foreign money does not sully our state and does not sully the reputation of our elections – that each and every one of us in here is voted in by the people and not because there is huge money out there that we cannot track and that we cannot trace casting long, dark shadows over our democracy.

There has been a lot of commentary in here today, and probably the most concerning that I have heard has been commentary talking about rigging elections. I am fundamentally fearful that if that kind of narrative is bandied about – not on the fringes and not by those out there who are sovereign citizens but by people who are duly elected into this chamber in one of the most robust democracies we have – we enter very dark territory. We start to go down a path I do not ever want to see in our state or our country. When we do not have complete faith in the democratic structures around us and in our electoral system – when we lose that faith and there is a chink in the armour because people decide that just to win an argument they are going to cast aspersions like this – we are on the cusp of something very dangerous indeed. I take this incredibly seriously. I have been listening hard, and it is completely Trumpist of those opposite to be claiming that anything to do with this bill is in any way to rig an election. I cannot believe that that is where they have gone today, because I did think that there was a modicum of decorum and there was an understanding here that if we all share something in this chamber, we share how important democracy is and faith in our electoral system. When those opposite who sit in here start to cast those terrible and egregious accusations, we are really going somewhere that I do not think any of us want to go to.

I have spoken with a Victorian Electoral Commission official who was in East Timor during that incredible referendum in 1999. He went there to ensure that there was absolute security in that election, that each vote was cast properly, that no-one was able to cast more than the vote that they were entitled to and that people were not intimidated in doing so. Australian peacekeepers went there to ensure that there was peace through that election.

I think sometimes people forget just how wonderful our electoral system is. I will defend it with my dying breath. I have sat there and scrutineered for over 24 years. I have been part of the process watching how the ballots are treated, watching how they are counted, watching how they are scrutinised. I am sure every one of us here has participated in that at some stage or another along the way. It is something we should be immensely proud of. It is something we should defend completely and utterly, and we should never, ever give any quarter to suggestions from those that you should be filling it out with pen, not pencil, because somehow it is going to be tampered with or delayed. It is an incredible electoral system, and I am beyond stupefied at the words 'being rigged'. It was even interjected when I first started my contribution on this. There was a member on the other side of the chamber who actually said, 'It is.' I cannot believe it. I hope I do not hear that anymore. Words matter. I have said it before. The words we say in here matter. The bill is not rigging our election system here in Victoria.

Members interjecting.

Daniela DE MARTINO: It is absolutely so wrong what I am hearing at the moment. I will also say that the member for Narracan, who I have a lot of time for, was concerned about the 1 July 2023 date. I will actually reveal to everyone why that date was chosen, because I wondered as well. It is the first day of the financial year post the November 2022 election. There are those opposite who are really unhappy with the nature of this bill at the moment because they do not like the cap – $7500. There is a point where if a cap is too high there may as well not be a cap at all. That cap is there; $7500 is what has been arrived at. That cap I think is an important one. It is one that we need to be careful of.

I actually spoke to someone who had a very intimate knowledge of the US electoral system, someone who had worked within the US political system for many years. I asked them, just as a matter of interest: for a backbencher in a state election, what would it cost for them to run a campaign in a fairly

moderately safe seat? How much does it cost in the US if you are in an equivalent state to Victoria? The figure that he replied with blew me away. In a general election – not a by-election – when everyone knows there is an election on, he told me the conservative figure is a million dollars per candidate. We must never, ever go anywhere down a path where that is the end result, because once people have to raise that kind of money, we stray into terrible territory indeed.

Capping donations like we do here in Victoria is fundamentally important; it is crucial. Getting this bill through both chambers and receiving royal assent is also critical because time is of the essence. As I have said, my colleagues here have mentioned, have reminded people, that since 15 April we have had nothing. We do not know what money has been flowing anywhere to anyone. We have no idea, because –

A member interjected.

Daniela DE MARTINO: There will be retrospectivity, but it will only take effect once it gets royal assent. So here we are. Time is of the essence, so we have to deal with this quickly, and we have to make sure that our electoral system is protected and that democracy is at the heart. I agree with the member for Melbourne in her statement before. She said, 'Money should not decide the outcome of an election; voters should.' Well, hear, hear to that. I heard the member for Pascoe Vale. He was also talking about protecting democracy and the people who died for it here. In other parts of the world, not everyone gets to vote. Not everyone gets the opportunity, or if they do, it is a sham and it counts for nothing. But I tell you, nothing has worried me more in my 3½ years of being in this chamber and listening to debates.

We all have different points of view and we all have a different vision of how we might see things being, but I did generally think that we had some floor of understanding here, that our democratic system was pretty darn good and needed strong defending and that we were all pretty much on a unity ticket there. So to hear the language I have heard today really concerns me, and I hope I do not hear it beyond here and I hope that it stops, because when we start to sow the seeds of doubt, perception is very important. For the public, the second they think there might be some kind of truth there, even if there is not, even if it is misinformation that has been repeated often enough – the second we go down that path, the days for us here in our state are very, very dark indeed. We have already got a fringe element out there who think that our elections are not robust, but they have been out there way out on the fringes. That should never, ever be entertained by those of us who are hopefully the adults in the room who know, because we have experienced our system through all facets of it.

So I commend this bill to the house. I am pleased to see that the cap on political donations is where it is at. I am pleased to see that this is about transparency and accountability and it is there to underpin our democracy, which I think is one of the finest in the world. Long live compulsory voting, long live preferential voting and long live political donations caps.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (18:41): Oh, the condescension of members opposite today. We have seen it all, haven't we? Apparently this is a system that the government have introduced without telling anyone, without showing anyone, without briefing anyone, with disingenuous negotiations, seeking to deal with the Greens, maybe deal with the coalition, deal with someone else, deal with this person – all of that behind the scenes – and then they run in this bill trying to guillotine it and ram it through in one day and then say, 'Oh, no, it's all above board. We haven't rigged the system.' Oh, yes, you will, and oh, yes, you want to. And when you ban, in effect, major donations from every other party but yours, well, would you say that is rigging the system? If you ban every other party from a major donation but yours just before an election where you are miles behind in the polls, would you say that is rigging the system? I would say when looking at this bill – we have not had much time – that is an accurate description of what the government wants to do.

I have heard it all today. I have been here about four or five times. I have seen this before – five or six times maybe – when members get closer to an election. You always see it when members get a little

bit crazy and a little bit on edge. They come out with 'The world's about to fall', and I am hearing this from government members today. I heard it from Tarneit. I heard it from Mordialloc; I will come back to him. I heard it from Laverton – talk about laced with condescension. I heard it from Albert Park. And I heard the member for Mordialloc – the king of integrity, the guy who is featured in two Ombudsman's reports, knee-deep in scandal – come in and lecture us on this bill on integrity. I could not believe it. I thought, 'This was the guy with the $5000 stamps issue, wasn't it?' This is the guy who featured in the red shirts rorts issue, where $388,000 was stolen from the Victorian taxpayer, and on this bill the member for Mordialloc finds time to come in and lecture the opposition – wait for it – on integrity. Can you believe it? I have just heard it all, and I thought, after seeing what occurred with the member for Kororoit in question time, to run into this chamber and then start accusing everyone else of meeting unsavoury people – 'Well, hang on, have you had a conversation with your own new minister?' He featured that as part of his discussions on this bill. I literally could not believe it. It sounded like a juvenile student political speech, and then I realised that is one of the government's heavy hitters, and that is where we have got to on this bill today.

I looked at it and thought here we are in the middle of a disastrous cost-of-living crisis for ordinary Australians – that is absolutely real – and the Australian Labor Party and the Victorian Labor government bring legislation into the Parliament to ram it through with no meaningful consultation to any other party, where they want to pay themselves more money from the Victorian taxpayer. They want to take more money with this bill to give to themselves to run their party and their campaigns and rip it out of the taxpayer at a time the taxpayer can ill afford it. It is the highest taxing state, Victoria. We have the highest taxes in Australia, and they are getting stung with a government that is paying $1.2 million an hour to service this debt. And the government's response is, 'We're going to fix the donations system and we're going to make the taxpayer pay more.' That is what their answer is: how do you fix the system? By making the taxpayer pay more. And fix it they are – they are rigging the system. And when you rig the system like this government is, I guess you have to have history, don't you – red shirts, when $388,000 was stolen from the taxpayer. All the Labor members coming in and talking about 'We're for workers; we stand up for workers'. You hear the Premier in every question time: 'We're for workers.' Whose money did they steal? Workers' money. They stole $388,000 from the Victorian taxpayer, and then they gave it back. You do not give it back if you are innocent. I have never seen a bank robber walk back to ANZ and say 'Sorry mate, this is yours. I'm going to give it back to you now, but please don't refer me to the coppers.' It is because Labor stole that money from the taxpayer. They have got history; they have got form in rigging things. That is what they did with red shirts, and that is what they are doing with this bill.

I find it astounding, the hypocrisy of the government on this matter. I find it just absolutely astounding. This government, the Labor Party, comes in and bags Australia Day. They bag all the institutions of this country. Yet the institutional left, they are the first ones to line up for honours and the regalia and the OAMs and the AMs. They are the first ones to line up for all of those. They are the ones who say the monarchy is evil, but I bet you they will take the long weekend off this weekend coming. These are the people in the Australian Labor Party that just – come on down, spinner. These are the people – the Australian Labor Party, the great leaders, the moral compass of this Parliament – who are happy to steal money off the taxpayers and steal money off workers in a cost-of-living crisis to make Victorian workers pay more of their hard-earned tax dollars to the Labor Party. That is what this bill is about. So when the Premier comes in here in question time tomorrow and says, 'We're going to help with cost of living because we know it is really tough for Victorians' – I will tell you how you can help Victorians just a little bit more. Do not pass this bill, because you are going to rip more money out of the Victorian taxpayer to pay yourself. But as I said before, with red shirts, Labor has got form on that. They like using the taxpayers purse as their own private kitty. The member in the upper house Evan Mulholland will tell you that the Premier has been doing this with these multicultural dinners, which are only for Labor MPs and controlled by the Premier's office. But of course they use the taxpayers purse as their own private kitty, and we see this again in this bill.

When we look at it from this side and we see the fire and brimstone, the worry and 'Oh, my God, democracy is at threat' coming from the members opposite, we just say, if all of that is true, why did they show no-one the bill when they had three to four weeks? Why did they not go to Gellung Warl and actually say to them, 'Can we get your point of view?' We just brought in this treaty, which I take it Labor feel very sincere about, whether I agree with it or not, but it says that everything will pass through them. And the first major piece of legislation has not. So how can we believe the sincerity of the Labor Party on this front? How can we honestly believe them, when on their own measure that the Labor Party has on the treaty bill, their first major piece of legislation does not meet that treaty requirement? Of course we look at it with great disdain. Why wouldn't we? We were not briefed on it. It rigs the system in favour of the union movement. They do not consult the treaty elders like they said they would. And on every other measure, we look at it and say it cannot be right.

I heard the Greens coming in here and I thought this was even weirder than the Labor members' contributions, and that is saying something. But they came in here and said, 'Well, you know, it's all the millionaires and billionaires who are going to be donating to big parties if we don't pass this urgent piece of legislation.' I scratched my head and thought, 'Hang on a tick. Didn't the founder of Wotif Graeme Wood give the largest individual donation in Australian history to any political party by any sole individual to the Greens?' I thought, 'Hang on a tick.' And this is the Greens running in here saying, 'We've got to pass this immediately, because big millionaires are going to give money to political parties.' Yes, theirs – that is what history shows. I thought to myself, 'You know, I get the hypocrisy from the government members opposite, which I expect because they are following a script six months from an election, when more than half a dozen of them are coming third on the primary vote in their own incumbent seats.' Yet the member for Mordialloc comes in talking about polling. Did you hear that one? I thought, 'Holy hell, what parallel universe have I woken up in? Suddenly Jacinta Allan is not minus 60, she must be plus 60.' No, she is minus 60. Anyway, that aside, we just think if you had any sincerity with this bill, you would have shown it. If there was any genuine attempt to negotiate, we would have got an outcome, because we all want an outcome that is not going to be struck out at the High Court. But this bill will be struck out, no doubt. We can all see it coming, so it is a temporary piece of legislation by an end-of-days government.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (18:51): It is good to follow somebody who was a temporary leader two times in a row, the member for Bulleen. I am shocked that the member for Bulleen would oppose this sort of legislation. He mentioned a moment ago that the Greens had the largest donation that the country has seen, $1 million – that we know about, because how much have the Cormack Foundation shoved into the coffers of the Liberal Party? How much? Is it a million? Is it $2 million? We do not have a disclosure regime currently. We do not have a single disclosure regime currently. So how much have the Liberal Party got and how much are they going to have to pay back from the period of 2023 to today? That is the question that is in front of this Parliament. That is why you are so opposed to it. That is why you are so worried about it – because you are concerned that you are going to have to pay it back. The Liberal Party used the opportunity under the cover of a no-disclosure regime being in place to put millions of dollars in, not just in Nepean but just to shuffle it in, to try and get it through without having to disclose it, hoping that they can negotiate to not have to disclose it in the future. Well, we are not up for that. We are up for disclosure. We are up to opening up the books to the Victorian public to see what has been donated.

I understand why the member for Bulleen is the sort of person who would not like to have a disclosure regime in place and who would like to oppose this bill. We all remember lobster with a mobster. That was very evident in the public. That was in the public domain. Do you think the dinner was not about donations? What do we think? What do we think these dinners were about? They were not to have a friendly chat over a bottle of Penfolds. Were they for that reason? Is that what we are trying to say in this space, member for Brighton? Now, the member for Caulfield, the geographically challenged member for Caulfield, who believes that Narre Warren is in the western suburbs – admittedly, he has been closer in the past. He got to Williams Landing and thought it was Point Cook. He is getting closer

each time. But Narre Warren – well, that was a shocker. It was just so far off the geography that we did not think it was right. 'Rigging the system' is what he said.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is required to be factual in his contribution, and that is what the Hopper party identified – Narre Warren as one of the seats. That was what was said, so I ask the member to be factual in his contribution.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): The member to continue.

Mathew HILAKARI: I look forward to reviewing *Hansard* tomorrow. We will both get to review it together. We can exchange some text messages. I will resend you the map for Point Cook, so you get a re-update on that one.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, again the member is referring to 'you', which I assume means the Acting Speaker –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Thank you for defending my honour. Thank you, member for Caulfield.

David Southwick: Can I conclude my point of order, please? I would ask the member to direct his contribution through the Chair.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): It is my role to direct the member and make requests of the member. I thank you for your point of order. Member for Point Cook, through the Chair, thank you.

Mathew HILAKARI: Thank you, Chair. I will make sure I avoid the word 'you'. I apologise for that error. The member for Narracan mentioned a lot about concerns around polling, as did the member for Bulleen. I would be on pretty reluctant ground, if I was the member for Narracan, to talk about polling. Polling for One Nation in this context, in this time period – well, we are seeing what has happened at the federal level. I look forward to the next poll coming out at the state level, because I think we will see something of a wipe-out going on: the Liberal Party second fiddle to One Nation, and the National Party second fiddle to no-one because they may not be on the electoral map. I do not think they will be a party by the end of this. I do not think they will even be across any chamber. We will not be worried about talking about the National Party anymore. The only party with 'nation' in the name will be One Nation, and that is because there is not the value set in this opposition to stand up to One Nation. There is not the backbone to stand up within this opposition –

Members interjecting.

Mathew HILAKARI: The member for Hawthorn chirps in. What a gutsy move. The member for Hawthorn and I spent some wonderful time on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee together. We did have some opportunity, but I would not chirp too loudly. I would not take the member for Brighton's advice to chirp loudly outside of this chamber.

But I do want to take us back to the bill, because this bill seeks to do some of those things that are important to our community. It is important to our community to see caps on political donations of course, because there is a great concern when you have a system that does not exist, as we have today, to put in one that exists to bring more legitimacy to politics. I want the Liberal Party to be supportive of these bills because I want them to be part of a better democracy in Victoria. There are elements that the Liberal Party are going to disagree with of course, but we want access to seeing who is paying for what in this political environment. The National Party, of all parties, should want this. The National Party should want a donation regime, because they should be worried about the million dollars that Gina Rinehart has put into One Nation. She would replicate the same in Victoria without a donation regime. You should be desperate to understand who is paying for the politics in this state, but you are not as desperate as I think, so you are being led by the Liberal Party once again. It is very sad to see.

There is no opportunity to set out your own vision of the future. Once again, it is very sad to see, but that is okay. It will not be a long time in this place –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member appears to be using language which is directing his commentary towards the Deputy Speaker, which is of course casting aspersions upon such a fine gentleman. I ask you to ask him to be appropriate in his language.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for her confidence. Yes, I remind the member for Point Cook that 'you' refers to the Chair. Let us not do that.

Mathew HILAKARI: I apologise, Deputy Speaker. I would not seek to do so. Of course we should ban anonymous donations over $1250. Regarding a ban on all foreign donations, this is the risk point for those people who participated in the recent by-election in Nepean – not for the new member for Nepean, who was busy out there campaigning and doing his very best, and those who know him speak highly of him, but for the party machine. What did they receive in this political campaign and from whom? The public deserves to know who is paying the piper. The bill will improve the enforcement and compliance mechanisms within Victoria, and I commend this bill to the house.

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

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (48): Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Nick Staikos, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Iwan Walters, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (27): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Anthony Marsh, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

The SPEAKER: The question is:

> That this bill be now read a third time.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (48): Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Nick Staikos, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina

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Question agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Hamilton Base Hospital

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (19:09): (1679) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is to urgently fund the long-awaited Western District Health Service Hamilton Base Hospital redevelopment. This is a hospital that I actually worked at some time ago, and it is a blight on the Allan Labor government, really, that the emergency department is essentially in the same state as it was when I worked there around 17 years ago now – quite a long time ago. The emergency department in particular I just want to focus on, because this is a critical area of every hospital. It is where you have ambulances bringing in critical patients. It is where there are often life-or-death decisions. There are people who are coming in because they are in labour. They might be kids who have fractured their shoulder or their collarbone or rolled their ankle at home or had another accident at home. It can also of course be where people come in when they are critically unwell with a terminal illness or needing treatment, and there are other aspects as well. We see people with mental health issues who are often waiting in emergency departments for an exceptionally long period of time. We have police bringing in people who are inebriated on drugs or alcohol who are also needing to be cared for in this environment.

At Hamilton Base Hospital what we see is a very, very aged piece of infrastructure. The rooms are pokey. There are areas that are simply separated by a curtain where you have to walk through one curtained area to get into the next curtained area. It offers no privacy, no respect for the patients. It certainly does not support the fabulous team at Western District Health Service in Hamilton to provide the best possible quality of care. It does not provide the best safety or security for patients or for staff. It does not provide the best clinical outcomes, and it certainly is not the most appropriate space for mental health care during critical times, when the hospital is not necessarily the best place for people to access that mental health support anyway.

The people of Western District have waited long enough. The need for action is immediate, and it is absolutely undeniable. I therefore ask the minister to make a clear and public funding commitment to funding the Hamilton Base Hospital redevelopment, set out the defined stages of the project from planning through to construction and completion and provide a specific timeframe for when the government will make its final investment decision. Our communities deserve certainty, and they deserve it now. They need a firm commitment, a transparent road map and a clear date by which this long-overdue redevelopment will be approved and delivered.

Mental health services

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (19:12): (1680) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Mental Health. The action that I seek is for the minister to provide an update on how our government is ensuring that our multicultural and multifaith communities have access to culturally appropriate mental health supports. Tonight visiting Parliament we have a very special group of young people who are representing the Cultura youth council and the Geelong youth council. These groups are visiting Parliament today to prepare themselves ahead of their upcoming Youth Parliament. The Geelong youth council's Reforming Biolink Requirements Bill 2026 explores environmental sustainability and improving connections between wildlife habitats. The Cultura youth council's Reforming Mental Health Resources for Multicultural Youth Bill 2026 is focused on improving access to culturally appropriate mental health support for young people from multicultural backgrounds through workshops, professional training and community engagement activities. This bill responds to the unique challenges faced by multicultural youth, including cultural stigma surrounding mental health, language barriers and barriers to accessing culturally safe support services. The members of these groups are incredibly strong leaders in our local community, and given Cultura Youth Council's focus on mental health resources, I know that they are just as eager as I am to hear from the minister about how our government is supporting our multicultural and multifaith communities to access mental health supports.

South-West Coast electorate road maintenance

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:14): (1681) I once again urge the minister to take responsibility for an extraordinary situation affecting motorists in South-West Coast. The action I seek is from the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it is a full explanation regarding the significant vehicle damage suffered by motorists on the Princes Highway during roadworks and to advise when a compensation process for those affected will be established. Over just three days, roadworks at Illowa resulted in more than $81,000 worth of vehicle damage. More than 70 motorists have contacted my office after their vehicles were struck by loose stones left on the highway following road maintenance. These motorists have reported smashed windscreens, chipped paintwork and other costly damage. Of those who have already undertaken the repairs, the cost exceeds $45,000, and a further $35,000 worth of repairs has been quoted but not yet completed, bringing the total to more than $81,500. That is huge, and that figure is almost certainly an underestimate. At a time when Victorian families are already being squeezed by the relentless cost-of-living pressures caused by a growing tax burden imposed by this Allan Labor government, the last thing that they should be forced to pay for is vehicle damage caused by government incompetence and failure on a state-managed road.

This incident raises serious questions about how these works were conducted. Motorists suffered damage while no loose stone warning signs were in place. The stones were then swept from the road, and only afterwards were warning signs erected when there were no stones – crazy. If the risk justified warning signs after the road had been swept, we may well ask why motorists were not warned when the loose stones were actually present and causing damage. The damage has not been limited to private vehicles. Buses have been affected, and even a Victoria Police highway patrol vehicle was damaged. This was not an isolated incident involving one or two unlucky motorists; it was a widespread failure by government that impacted dozens of road users travelling on a major state-managed highway.

I have raised the matter with the Insurance Australia Group to ensure insurers are aware of the circumstances and the number of motorists affected. Perhaps there is a possible case for coordinated action to establish accountability and to ensure fault does not unfairly fall upon individual drivers. It is unacceptable that motorists are left paying insurance expenses and excesses or bearing the full costs themselves for damage caused by poor road work management. When members of the public cause damage through negligence, they are expected to take responsibility. The same standard must be applied to the government and their contractors when their actions and failures cause avoidable harm. More than $81,000 in damage in just three days is not a minor oversight, it is a major failure.

Bass electorate health services

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (19:16): (1682) Hello, Claire, watching from home, and happy birthday, Luke.

My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit my electorate of Bass to meet with and hear directly from our extraordinarily dedicated and deeply caring healthcare workers at Kooweerup health service, Phillip Island Community Hospital and Wonthaggi Hospital. We have a wonderful local story to tell, with a number of initiatives and signature projects completed, underway, expanding and on the horizon, all translating to better health care close to home.

Kooweerup health service, an ideal first visit, operate an outstanding early parenting unit supporting families with babies aged zero to 12 months through tailored programs and expert care. Recently they received funding to upgrade nurse call systems at the Killara and Westernport units, improving safety and responsiveness for patients and staff. It is also time for the official opening of the Phillip Island Community Hospital, a significant milestone for our region. At Wonthaggi Hospital we are getting on with delivering stage 2A, and that is a new pharmacy, a medical imaging suite, pathology services and more. This year's budget continues our strong commitment to accessible healthcare and wellbeing supports, including ongoing mental health services at Phillip Island health hub, free meningococcal B vaccinations for year 10 students in 2027, an urgent care clinic at Cranbourne Community Hospital, the opening of Pakenham in early 2027 and a new PET scanner at the redeveloped $1.1 billion Frankston Hospital. Since 2014 we have opened 11 new hospitals and employed over 40,000 extra nurses, midwives, doctors and healthcare workers, and I thank them for the amazing care they deliver every day. Thank you, Minister. I look forward to seeing you on your visit.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members that acknowledging the gallery, which includes the broadcast, is disorderly.

Narambi Reserve

Chris CREWTHER (Mornington) (19:18): (1683) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Community Sport. The action I seek is for the minister to urgently visit Narambi recreation reserve in Mornington to meet with Mornington Junior Football Club to discuss funding towards the redevelopment of its desperately inadequate facilities. Mornington Junior Football Club is one of the great local sporting success stories. It is growing quickly, it is inclusive and it is doing exactly what we want junior clubs to do – getting young people active, connected and involved in their community. But the facilities at Narambi recreation reserve are simply not keeping up.

In 2019 the Mornington Peninsula shire prepared a master plan for Narambi. At that time the club had around 120 junior players. Today it has 381 junior players, including 120 girls playing from under-12s through to under-18s. That growth should be celebrated. This year the club fielded its first ever under-18 girls team, with special commemorative jumpers with pink trim to mark the occasion. I am pleased that some of those under-18 girls are here tonight in the chamber, along with one of the boys, parents, club officials and committee members. That includes Sam, Logan, Natalie, Isabelle, Simon, Zoe, Matilda, Ruby, Melissa, Cam and Kennedy.

They should be proud of what they have achieved, but they should not have to keep achieving it with facilities that are clearly not good enough. At one oval the club is relying on outdated clubrooms that are no longer fit for purpose. At the other oval, where many of the girls teams train and play, there is a tiny transportable, two plastic portaloos, no running water and no proper lighting. That means young girls are expected to use portaloos in the dark. There is no running water for them to wash their hands. If players want to fill their drink bottles, they have to walk down to the bottom oval and use the tap also used to fill dog bowls. That is not safe, dignified or acceptable. The club is not asking for a luxury, it is asking for basic, modern and safe facilities that match the size and the needs of the club.

I acknowledge that Mornington Peninsula shire has supported work such as irrigation and drainage at the bottom oval, but the immediate problem remains. The capital works pipeline does not appear to address the portaloo and no running water situation at the top of the oval in the next four years, let alone the facilities, which are perhaps some of the worst facilities I have seen in the whole of the Mornington electorate. That is why the state government needs to step in. This government needs to find funding so that junior female footballers in Mornington, and footballers generally, do not have to use portaloos in the dark. Minister, please come to Narambi Reserve, see the conditions for yourself and help deliver the facilities that these young players here deserve.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I reiterate my reminder of the standing orders, member for Mornington. Please follow them.

Werribee electorate roads

John LISTER (Werribee) (19:21): (1684) My adjournment matter tonight is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action I seek is a briefing on the progress of the Werribee Main Road interchange upgrade and the appointment of a contractor. When I was first announced as a candidate for Werribee, my advocacy started straightaway to find solutions to the traffic lining up along the Princes Freeway to exit at the C109 and Werribee Main Road interchange. During the by-election the federal and state Labor governments announced funding to complete a full upgrade of the interchange, including an additional lane on the bridge as well as additional lanes coming off and going onto the freeway and signalised intersections hooked up to Melbourne to help us manage that traffic flow. Within months of getting elected I had secured temporary lights to help traffic move more efficiently off the freeway towards Werribee. These lights have kept traffic moving and reduced the time it takes to exit the freeway, but more needs to be done as quickly as possible.

Over the past 12 months I have worked tirelessly to get projects like the Ballan Road upgrade and Ison Road extension out of the ground and on the fast track to completion. I visited both sites recently and saw firsthand the progress on these projects that are vital to reducing congestion across Wyndham Vale and Werribee. This is why I ran for Parliament. We do not need hollow platitudes about roads with no commitment to an actual project from the likes of the Liberals. Planning and approvals have been underway for the main road interchange this year, so I request a briefing on the next steps towards construction. This project is part of a rolling set of works to build the Wyndham ring road –

A member interjected.

John LISTER: I know the member opposite has probably been in the bar and is a little bit excited, but I would appreciate it if I could raise this important issue for my community.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Imputations are disorderly.

John LISTER: Sorry. This project is part of a rolling set of works to build the Wyndham ring road, because Labor knows that Werribee needs more local roads to reduce congestion. I will continue to fight for my community on matters like this in a Labor government that is getting on with delivering better roads and infrastructure for Werribee.

Hawthorn Amateur Football Club

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (19:23): (1685) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Mental Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me at the Hawthorn Amateur Football Club to meet with club members and volunteers behind their Wings program and learn more about the role grassroots sporting clubs can play in supporting mental health and wellbeing in our community. Recently the *Age* and Channel 9 highlighted the remarkable work being undertaken by the Hawthorn Amateurs through the Wings program, an initiative established following the tragic loss of three members of the club community to suicide in 2010. Rather than allowing that tragedy to define them, the club chose to respond with action. Over the past 16 years the Wings program has evolved into a comprehensive mental health and wellbeing initiative. It provides subsidised access to

counselling and psychological services, trains club members in mental health first aid, raises awareness of the challenges many people face and fosters a culture where people feel comfortable checking in on one another and asking for help when they need it.

Every year the club hosts a Wings lunch with special guest speakers. Last Saturday I was honoured to attend and hear from Lauren and the team at Graham Psychology on how clubs can improve their culture and support systems for teammates when they may be showing signs that they are struggling. The club raised $5109 for their Wings mental health fund, which provides professional mental health support for the club's community. Every Thursday evening players gather after training and take part in what is known as the triple H: sharing a hardship, a highlight from their week and a hero they admire. It is a simple exercise but one that encourages honesty, connection and conversation.

I wish to acknowledge past president Pat Clancey, who was instrumental in establishing the program in 2010, and remember club members who have been tragically lost: Jacob Pitcher, David Holland, Danny Priest and Peter Lynch. I particularly want to acknowledge club president Sam Waldron, Wings program coordinator Charlotte Miller and all the volunteers, coaches and players involved in the program, as well as those who have worked to ensure their beloved teammates remain an enduring inspiration to help others and save lives.

In a world where many people are increasingly isolated, community sporting clubs continue to play a vital role in bringing people together. They create friendships, foster belonging and provide support networks that extend well beyond the boundary line. Hawthorn Amateurs have shown what can be achieved when a community comes together with compassion, purpose and determination. I therefore ask the Minister for Mental Health to join me at the Hawthorn Amateur Football Club, meet those involved in the program and explore the opportunities to emulate this program across Victoria so others too can benefit.

St Mary's Primary School, Inglewood

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (19:26): (1686) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is that the minister acknowledge the need for Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited to reconsider their closure of St Mary's Primary School in Inglewood. For more than 160 years St Mary's has been at the heart of Inglewood. It has shaped generations of local children, helping them learn, grow and find their footing in the world.

As recently as 2022 the Victorian government invested $445,000 to upgrade the school's creative arts room, music centre and community meeting space, a clear sign of confidence in its future. Local families were left blindsided by the diocese's decision last month to close the school forever. The suddenness of the decision, without warning or any chance to lift enrolments or plan a path forward, has left the community shocked and scrambling. If St Mary's closes, the Loddon shire will be left without a single Catholic primary school. Children from Newbridge, Bridgewater, Inglewood and surrounding communities will face long daily commutes to and from Bendigo, and some families may decide to leave our area altogether. Rural and regional communities deserve certainty and support, not decisions that leave them feeling abandoned. I have written to Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited asking them to reconsider their decision, as our community deserves the chance to protect and strengthen a school that has served it for generations.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Ripon, the action that you mentioned for the minister?

Martha HAYLETT: Is that the minister acknowledges the need for Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited to reconsider the closure. I seek to have a meeting with the Minister for Education about the decision.

Polwarth electorate tourism infrastructure

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (19:28): (1687) My adjournment debate this evening is for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek from the minister is for him to provide the necessary

funds to help the Lorne community rebuild its walking paths and bridges following the devastating flash floods in January this year. Some 800,000 people a year make use of the walking trails and tracks in the Otways and around the Lorne community, and unfortunately today most of those keenly sought after tracks are closed, and they will be closed for quite some time because there are bridges and walking tracks that have been washed away. These are expensive repairs. I was somewhat pleased to see in the budget there was some $2.7 million allocated for tourism and nature-based activities in the Otways and on the Great Ocean Road, and I thought, 'Goody, goody, this is money that will help repair these roads and tracks.' But sadly last week at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing we learned that that $2.7 million is more top-up funding, in addition to the $130 million, for the as yet not opened and empty visitor centre down at the Twelve Apostles. I thought to myself, 'How on earth can we still not have expensive toilets and a cafe built for $130 million? Why on earth does it need another $2.7 million?' – only to be told by the local community that it is not $2.7 million more they need; they still need another $10 million before they will be able to open it.

Minister, there has been a lot of money invested into some strange objectives of this government along the Great Ocean Road, but we really need some funds for the basics – for what people actually come to the Otways region for. They come to get to the beach, so we need our beach accesses open. We have got beach accesses that have been closed for more than three years. We have got walking tracks and bridges so people can go and enjoy the waterfalls and visit the beautiful eucalyptus forests and the towering fern trees. We need those paths repaired, Minister, and we would love you to be able to provide that support to that community and to Parks Victoria, to Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority – to whichever government agency you are going to allocate the responsibility to. It is vital for our community. They have had a very tough summer down at Lorne and along the Great Ocean Road with the inclement weather and the strange conditions. We cannot afford to have the activities of 800,000 people put on hold indefinitely until you can find the funds. So please find those funds and get them to GORCAPA so that we can get these important facilities fixed and repaired.

Sunbury electorate waste and recycling management

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (19:31): (1688) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Planning. The action I seek is to meet with the minister and to discuss my wish that no approval be made for any waste-to-energy facility in my electorate. This of course has been a well-canvassed issue. There is a parliamentary inquiry that is underway in relation to these matters, and I want to thank the committee for their work, but most importantly I want to thank the community for their strong and consistent advocacy, who have both presented to the committee and written formal submissions during that process. I had the opportunity to attend a local community rally just a couple of weeks ago at the Village Green in Sunbury, and I thank and acknowledge those that were there and thank and acknowledge the collective for the passion and spirit which many took to that forum. Can I also make the observation that when local community members act in a way that makes us proud as a community to advocate strongly and fairly, we of course become better. When those in our community seek to advocate in a way that is shameful, disrespectful and disgraceful, that of course makes our community a lesser place. I said these words to our community on that day – and the vast majority of people there do indeed do the right thing – and made my remarks not just as the member for Sunbury for 12 years now but as a 40-year local resident. I love our community, and I will do everything in my power to ensure that this proposal is stopped.

Responses

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Defence Industry, Minister for Skills and TAFE) (19:33): The member for Lowan raised a matter for the Minister for Health to urgently fund the Hamilton Base Hospital redevelopment, and I will refer that matter to the minister. The hardworking, fantastic member for Lara raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health to provide an update on how government is ensuring that our multicultural and multifaith communities have access to culturally appropriate mental health supports – a great issue to raise, and I will make sure that matter is referred to the minister. The member for South-West Coast

raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to provide an explanation of roadworks on the Princess Highway and in particular of the damage to vehicles – an important issue, and I will make sure that matter is referred to the minister. The hardworking, sensational member for Bass raised a matter for the Minister for Health asking the minister to visit healthcare services in the Bass electorate. I will make sure that the minister gets that request, and I am sure that the minister will be keen to attend. The member for Mornington raised a matter for the Minister for Community Sport to urgently visit Mornington Junior Football Club, and I will make sure that that matter is passed on to the minister.

The hardworking, dedicated member for Werribee raised a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure seeking a briefing on the progress of the Werribee Main Road interchange, and I will make sure that matter is passed on. The member for Hawthorn raised a very important matter for the Minister for Mental Health seeking that she visit with him the Hawthorn Amateurs to discuss the Wings program – a very important program. There is a lot of politics in this place, but on that matter I think there is a genuine desire to work together across the chamber, so I am sure the minister will attend that. If not, there will be other ministers who are prepared to make that visit.

The hardworking, dynamic member for Ripon raised a matter for the Minister for Education asking the minister to consider the need for Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited to reconsider their closure of St Mary's Primary School in Inglewood and raised a number of concerns about that. The member for Polwarth raised a matter for the Minister for Environment asking that he provide funding to repair walking paths and bridges on the Great Ocean Road, and I will make sure that matter is referred on. The excellent member for Sunbury raised a matter for the Minister for Planning seeking that the minister meet with him to discuss his desire that there be no approval of a waste-to-energy project in his electorate, and I will make sure that matter is referred to the minister.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7:36 pm.