Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 17 February 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

Jacinta Allan (from 27 September 2023)

Daniel Andrews (to 27 September 2023)

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll (from 28 September 2023)

Jacinta Allan (to 27 September 2023)

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

Jess Wilson (from 18 November 2025)

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

John Pesutto (to 27 December 2024)

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

David Southwick (from 28 January 2026)

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

David Southwick (to 27 December 2024)

Leader of the Nationals

Danny O'Brien (from 26 November 2024)

Peter Walsh (to 26 November 2024)

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Anthony Carbines (from 15 April 2026)

Mary-Anne Thomas (to 15 April 2026)

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury (from 13 October 2025)

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

James Newbury (to 7 January 2025)

Members of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

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

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

Party abbreviations

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

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Tuesday 17 February 2026

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

Members

Member for Nepean

Resignation

The SPEAKER (12:04): I wish to announce that on 13 February 2026 I received the resignation of the member for Nepean. I will issue a writ for a by-election in due course.

Condolences

Hon Alan Henry Scanlan

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (12:04): I move:

> That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of the Honourable Alan Henry Scanlan and places on record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Assembly for the district of Oakleigh from 1961 to 1979, Minister of Health from 1973 to 1976 and Minister of Special Education from 1976 to 1979.

Before Alan Scanlan stood in this Parliament, he stood in a classroom. He trained at Melbourne Teachers' College after studying at Melbourne High School and worked as a teacher for students with special needs. That beginning tells us a lot about what drew him to this place. Alan understood that opportunity starts early, that what happens in a classroom can shape the entire direction of someone's life. It is no accident that education became central to his work here in Parliament. Alan Scanlan became the Minister of Special Education at a time when support for students with additional needs was improving in serious and lasting ways. In the 1970s expectations were shifting. Families wanted more inclusion, more recognition, more practical support for their children. Alan served during that moment of change. He also served as Minister of Health. Health and education are where government becomes real. These are where the decisions are felt most directly: in homes, in schools, in hospitals. They require care, patience and a willingness to improve systems that affect people every single day. Alan too represented Oakleigh for 18 years – years when Victoria itself was growing, suburbs were expanding, new communities were forming and schools and hospitals had to grow with them.

While we may come from different political traditions, there was in his generation of Liberals a belief that public institutions were not a burden but a foundation, that investing in education and health was part of building a strong and stable Victoria. I cannot help but think of what he would have thought about our education system today, a system that is more inclusive, more responsive and more ambitious for all of our children than at any time in our history. He would see, building on the work that he had started, students with specialist needs supported not on the margins but at the centre of that approach. He would see that work of dedicated specialist schools, integrated classrooms and allied health professionals working alongside teachers in schools. For someone who began his working life in a classroom, who used that experience to build these foundations to help improve our state, that is progress that matters. I did not know Alan Scanlan personally, but I respect anyone who has given nearly two decades of their life to serving in this place, representing their community and making a difference for those kids who need that special assistance and support in our education system. Alan Scanlan gave that time to our state. On behalf of the government and the people of Victoria I extend our sincere condolences to his family, his friends and all who knew him. Vale, Alan Scanlan.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (12:08): I rise to add my remarks to this motion on behalf of the Liberal Party. Alan Scanlan was a member of Parliament, a minister and a true Liberal stalwart. I want to acknowledge Alan's wife Shirley, who is here in the gallery today along with their niece Amanda. I just had a chat with Shirley earlier, and she was talking about how she met Alan in

London when she was a teacher herself and, in her own description, very pasty. It was a winter's day, and into the staffroom walks Alan, a big bronzed Australian man. He caught the attention of all the ladies in the room, and in her words, she won. They married in 1961. When I asked Shirley, 'What did you love the most about Alan?' she said, 'He always made me laugh, and I loved him to the very end.' Shirley herself has been a longstanding Liberal supporter and, as is the case with all the wives and husbands of politicians, has herself given much to the cause. We welcome you, Shirley, and we thank you for your own contributions as well as acknowledging the significant role you played during Alan's time as a parliamentarian and a minister of the Crown.

I have spoken to many colleagues over the past few days who fondly remember Alan as both a very thoughtful man and one whose work has made a lasting impact on this state. Born in Caulfield, Alan's political service began early in life, serving as Victorian Young Liberals president between 1959 and 1961. As a former president of the Victorian Young Liberals myself, I can certainly attest to how leading the youth movement of the party is an early test of both conviction and character. But perhaps the more formative moments of Alan's prepolitical career were the years spent teaching in Australia and abroad after studying at Melbourne Teachers' College. Alan clearly understood how vital the role of the teacher is in shaping the learning outcomes of students. In his inaugural speech Alan had this to say about the importance of teachers:

> … we are all aware of the fact that the quality and calibre of education is dependent upon those who teach …

Alan was a popular teacher at Oakleigh Primary School, which last year celebrated its 150-year anniversary. His significant connection to the community in Oakleigh was no doubt a factor in his long tenure as the local parliamentarian, serving as member for Oakleigh for 17 years.

Alan was also a man ahead of his time as an advocate for the education of children living with a disability. He graduated from Melbourne Teachers' College as a specialist teacher, which was the parlance at the time for those who chose to work closely with students with a disability. In 1972 Alan reflected, in an interview with the *Herald* at the time, that teaching at the Kew Cottages in the early 1950s was a tough assignment. He mentioned open sewers and children dressed in sacks. The site of the Kew Cottages today is a lovely residential part of my electorate, but in Alan's day it served as a residential and educational institution for children with intellectual disability, adjoining what was then known as the Kew asylum. Those were dark days, and it is important to reflect on how far we have come as a society since Alan was a teacher there some 75 years ago. A big part of the progress here in Victoria is the work done by the then Liberal government to drive a change in attitudes and public policy towards children with a disability. Alan was appointed as the first Minister of Special Education in 1976. He drove the establishment of special education schools across the state, whose architecture was explicitly designed to deinstitutionalise the education of children with a disability. He also worked with the Commonwealth to establish a funding agreement to subsidise employers who provided jobs to students with a disability when they finished school. Back in the 1970s this would have been trailblazing policy, and I am proud to note it was made real under a Liberal government that Alan served in. While I appreciate that there are varying opinions on the role of specialist schools, the coalition will always stand for parental choice about the educational setting that is right for their child, just as we did in Alan's time, and we must always make sure that we listen to parents about what is best for their children and empower them with the choices they need to give their children the best start in life. I believe the contribution that Alan made to our thinking in this area is profound and long lasting.

Alan Scanlan entered Parliament at the age of 30, the youngest person to have been sworn in at the time. As well as Minister of Special Education, Alan also served as health minister for a few tumultuous years. The *Age* reported in 1976 that the criticism Alan came under while serving the Crown as health minister took a toll on him and his family. There is no doubt that public life can be challenging, both then and now. But as Alan's family, friends and loved ones grieve his passing, they may take comfort in the fact that he truly changed lives and shaped the future of Victoria for the better.

That is what it means to be a parliamentarian and to serve in this place. His is a legacy of service and of compassion.

Again I want to acknowledge Shirley in the gallery and express our condolences to her at this time. On behalf of the Liberal Party, we remember Alan with gratitude, honour his contributions to this state and extend our condolences to those who knew and loved him. Vale, Alan Scanlan.

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:14): Over the summer break I was saddened to hear of the passing of former member for Oakleigh Alan Scanlan on 22 December at the age of 94. Although I never had the opportunity to meet Alan, I am always conscious of the privilege of representing the same community and serving in the same Parliament as those who came before. Our local area has been shaped over many decades by people who were prepared to dedicate part of their lives to public service. Alan was one of those people.

As we have heard, Alan joined the Liberal Party of Australia in 1952 and, following a hiatus to teach in London, became involved in organisational leadership upon his return, serving, as the Leader of the Opposition said, as president of the Young Liberals division from 1959. From 1961 to 1979 he served as member for Oakleigh. Next year the seat of Oakleigh will celebrate 100 years of representation in this place. In that time there have been 10 people who have represented the seat of Oakleigh, with Alan having the distinct honour of being the longest serving of those – a total of 18 years. During his time in Parliament Alan also served in several ministerial roles, as the Premier said, including health and disability. These were significant responsibilities at a time, again as the Premier said, when Melbourne's south-east was growing and expanding, communities were having greater and greater expectations of their government and there were increasing demands for essential services and a growing care sector.

Closer to home, one of Alan's most visible contributions still stands today, the Warrigal Road overpass. I do not know what the community would do without that overpass. It connects the northern and southern sides of Warrigal Road, therefore the north and south side of Oakleigh, across the Cranbourne–Pakenham rail line. It was delivered during his time as a local member and sits across from my electorate office, so I see it every day. For residents, it improved safety, eased traffic and strengthened connections within the community. It remains a lasting and very tangible reminder of his service and, can I say, also a proof point when I talk to people about sky rail and about the fact that these things are important because they do connect communities – grade separation in a different way.

After concluding his parliamentary career, Alan did not step away from community life. He later moved to Trinity Beach in Queensland, where he served as a local councillor. His continued involvement at a local level reflected a longstanding commitment to contributing where he lived – the very essence of public service.

Public life often involves long hours and considerable sacrifice, not only for those elected but also for their families, and on this note I want to acknowledge Mrs Shirley Scanlan. I cannot say I know Mrs Scanlan, but I have met her a couple of times because she was heavily involved, from my outsider's perspective, in the local Liberal campaigns. I hope Mrs Scanlan does not object to me sharing a story, but it was memorable to me. Mrs Scanlan may not remember, but I was letterboxing a beautiful part of the electorate, Chadstone, and, as I recall, a very beautiful property that Mrs Scanlan came out of, and she made it very clear to me that she had loyalties to the Liberal Party, not to me. We always say in politics you believe the people who tell you they are not going to vote for you. So thank you, Mrs Scanlan, for making that very clear. And I moved on my merry way.

It is fitting that we acknowledge Alan's decades of service and the contribution he made to both Oakleigh and the wider community. On behalf of the Oakleigh community I extend my sincere condolences to Alan's loved ones. His life was marked by steady service and a practical focus on the

wellbeing of the communities he represented. That legacy endures in the infrastructure around us and in the history of the electorate he served for nearly two decades. Vale, Alan Scanlan.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:18): I rise today on behalf of the Nationals to honour the life and service of Alan Henry Scanlan, a man whose contribution to public life and to the people of Victoria deserves our sincere recognition and respect. Alan Scanlan served the Victorian Parliament as the member for Oakleigh from 1961 until 1979, and his career reflected a belief that government exists to serve people in practical and meaningful ways, particularly those most in need of our support.

Before entering public life, as we have heard, Alan worked as a schoolteacher and youth supervisor, and those early experiences clearly shaped his parliamentary priorities. He never lost sight of the importance of investing in young people and ensuring that education systems serve all members of society, including those who require additional support. I take up the story that the Leader of the Opposition referred to from the *Herald* in 1972, when Alan reflected on his time at Kew Cottages. The additional quote that was mentioned is:

> One teacher got bailed up by a kid with a knife, another caught a disease and all his hair fell out.
>
> These appalling things influenced everybody who became a special teacher at that time.
>
> **That's why when modern-day teachers grumble to me about conditions, I can't get upset.**

I offer that quote to the current Minister for Education in case it is useful for him to use in current circumstances. I suspect not, but it highlights that experience will shape what a member and a minister will go on to do. Alan also served as the Minister of Health between 1973 and 1976.

Within Parliament, Alan was known as a diligent and conscientious member. His service on committees, including the Standing Orders Committee and the Public Works Committee, demonstrated his willingness to contribute to the detailed and often less visible work that supports the effective functioning of this august institution.

As others have said, the member for Oakleigh in particular, following parliamentary service Alan continued to contribute to public life and community life. His involvement in local government, tourism promotion and community organisations in Queensland in particular showed that his commitment to service did not end when he left this place. Whether working to support local ratepayers, promote regional tourism or represent community interests, he remained dedicated to strengthening the communities in which he lived.

While today we reflect on Alan's professional achievements, it is of course equally important to acknowledge the personal qualities that underpin a life of service. Public service, as we all know, particularly parliamentary service, demands personal sacrifice from both members and their families, and we all know the saying that we are volunteers, but our families are conscripts in this job. Therefore I acknowledge and thank Alan's family, especially Shirley, for their support throughout his career and extend to them our deepest condolences.

Parliamentary institutions are shaped not only by landmark reforms or major legislation but by the dedication and collective will of individuals who give their time, energy and conviction to public service. Alan Scanlan was one such individual. His contribution helped strengthen Victoria's education and health systems, and his commitment to community service continued long after he left this chamber. On behalf of the Nationals, I express our sincere gratitude for his service to the Victorian Parliament and to the broader community. We honour his legacy and we extend our deepest condolences to his family. Vale, Alan Scanlan.

Motion agreed to in silence, members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (12:23): I move:

> That, as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Honourable Alan Henry Scanlan, the house now adjourns until 1:30 today.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 12:23 pm.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER took the chair at 1:32 pm.

Bills

Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2026

Introduction and first reading

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance, Minister for Government Services) (13:32): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021, the Competition Policy Reform (Victoria) Act 1995, the Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987, the Environment Protection Act 2017, the Gas Industry Act 2001, the Grain Handling and Storage Act 1995, the Local Government Act 2020, the Spent Convictions Act 2021, the Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972, the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 and the Accident Compensation Act 1985 in relation to minor, technical and operational matters, to make statute law revision amendments to the Labour Hire Legislation Amendment (Licensing) Act 2025 and minor amendments to the Restricting Non-disclosure Agreements (Sexual Harassment at Work) Act 2025 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (13:33): I request a brief explanation of the bill from the minister.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance, Minister for Government Services) (13:34): The Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2026 will amend various acts in relation to minor technical and operational matters and make statute law revision amendments to the Labour Hire Legislation Amendment (Licensing) Act 2025 and minor amendments to the Restricting Non-disclosure Agreements (Sexual Harassment at Work) Act 2025 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (13:34): Government business, notice of motion 23, and general business, notices of motion 57 to 59, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 5 pm today.

Petitions

Pascoe Vale electorate road safety

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) presented a petition bearing 514 signatures:

> **Issue:**
>
> This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the urgent road safety measures required to improve the safety for all road users, in particular vulnerable road users and local residents, along the Sydney Road Corridor, from O'Hea Street in Coburg North to Boundary Road in Fawkner. As a major north-south arterial corridor that facilitates thousands of freight, private-vehicle, public transport and other commuter movements every day, the corridor has continued to experience unacceptably high rates of fatalities, serious injuries, accidents, close calls and near misses.

As highlighted by the recent Parliamentary Inquiry on Vulnerable Road User Safety, key arterials like Sydney Road should be prioritised for new road safety, traffic calming and mitigation measures to help ensure everyone has safe options to drive, walk, or ride to and from their home, including the increasing number of young families, elderly residents and vulnerable road users in the area.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly address urgent new road safety investments and measures on the Sydney Road Corridor, from O'Hea Street in Coburg North to Boundary Road in Fawkner, via the introduction of safer speeds, improved signage, enhanced pedestrian crossings, dedicated turning lanes, traffic calming measures, greater provisions and protections for pedestrians, cyclists and road users, along with stronger enforcement.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Committees

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Alert Digest No. 2

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (13:36): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 2 of 2026, on the following acts, bills and subordinate legislation, together with their appendices:

Building Legislation Amendment (Fairer Payments on Jobsites and Other Matters) Act 2025

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

Electoral Amendment (Group Voting and Vote Counting) Bill 2026

Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters Bill) 2026

Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Financial Assurance) Act 2025

SR No. 72 – Country Fire Authority Regulations 2025

SR No. 82 – Victorian Energy Efficiency Target (Project-Based Activities) Amendment Regulations 2025

SR No. 105 – Surveillance Devices Amendment (Body-worn Cameras and Other Matters) Regulations 2025

SR No. 107 – Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Link) Amendment Regulations 2025

Notice to Fix Fees under Section 73 of the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007

Energy Retail Code of Practice (Energy Consumer Reforms) Amendment 2025.

Ordered to be published.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 – Orders under s 17D granting leases over Albert Park (2 orders)

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 – Notice under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule 146/2025 *(Gazette S74, 12 February 2026)*

Maryborough District Health Service – Report 2024–25 *(replacement for copy tabled on 30 October 2025)*

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

Alpine – C56

Hobsons Bay – C133

Monash – C173

Victoria Planning Provisions – VC245, VC271

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Australian Grands Prix Act 1994 – SR 7

Residential Tenancies Act 1997 – SRs 5, 6

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 146/2025, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6.

PROCLAMATION – Under SO 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamation fixing an operative date:

Social Services Regulation Amendment (Child Safety, Complaints and Worker Regulation) Act 2025 – Ss 75, 83(1), 115 and 125, Division 10 of Part 3.2, Part 3.3 (other than s 131) and Part 4.5, and Schedule 2 – 9 February 2026 – Part 3.1 and s 131, and Schedule 1 – 23 February 2026 *(Gazette S 50, 3 February 2026)*.

Bills

Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Financial Assurance) Bill 2025

Council's agreement

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (13:38): The Speaker has received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Financial Assurance) Bill 2025 without amendment.

Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025

Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Financial Assurance) Bill 2025

Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster) Bill 2025

Royal assent

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (13:38): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025, the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Financial Assurance) Bill 2025 and the Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster) Bill 2025.

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

Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Appropriation

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (13:39): The Speaker has received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Free TAFE Guarantee) Bill 2026 and the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026.

Motions

Motions by leave

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:39): I move, by leave:

That this house calls on the state Labor government to institute a royal commission into corruption on Victorian government Big Build sites, the worst corruption ever seen by our state.

Leave refused.

Business of the house

Program

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Women) (13:39): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on Thursday 19 February 2026:

Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025

Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Supporting Stable and Strong Families) Bill 2025

Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026.

An important government business program is to be considered in this house today. As I welcome members back for the second sitting week of 2026 I recognise that, as much as everything that we do in this place is vitally important, the time that we spend in our communities listening to our communities and delivering for our communities I think does not always get the same attention but is certainly what drives and motivates members on this side of the house every single day. I had good cause to reflect on this this morning at the new Footscray Hospital, a $1.5 billion investment by our government – a jewel in the crown for Melbourne's west. Only Labor governments invest in and deliver the health services and infrastructure that our community needs. It was with great pride that I was able to join so many members of the government benches at that new and magnificent hospital today.

But we are back in the house and, as I said, three bills are to be debated in this place. The Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025 goes to the fact that our government is absolutely focused on ensuring that we are delivering the public services that Victorians need, expect and indeed deserve – good schools, world-class hospitals – and making sure we have got safe communities and that we are doing all that we can to deliver help to address the cost-of-living pressures that Victorian families are experiencing. That is why we are focused on addressing, where we have found it, inefficient or a duplication of government activity. That is what the Silver review is all about, and the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill is part of the way in which we are working to implement some of the recommendations from that important review, because we have to be laser focused on delivering the services that matter most to the people of the Victorian community.

The Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Supporting Stable and Strong Families) Bill 2025 goes to the heart of what good Labor governments are all about. It is really about protecting our most vulnerable children, and the way in which we can best do that is by supporting families. The best place for a child is in a well-supported family, and we must do everything within our power to support children to grow up in strong, stable homes. The Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Supporting Stable and Strong Families) Bill proposes to introduce a new model of shared responsibilities across the Victorian government to improve outcomes for at-risk children, young people and families. I have got to say as the Minister for Health I really welcome this bill. I welcome the opportunity to take on the challenge that this bill presents to government to ensure that all of our agencies are directed appropriately to support our most vulnerable and at-risk children and, as I have said, to also ensure that we are supporting strong, healthy, stable families. So that is a very important bill before the house. One goal of the bill is reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. We are absolutely committed to acquitting recommendations arising from the *Yoorrook for Justice* report, and this will go to acquitting recommendation 25 of that report.

Finally, the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026 is extremely timely, given the fact that we are on an extreme fire risk day today and given the devastating fires that we have seen this year already. We know that these catastrophic conditions that we have experienced have impacted our electricity distribution network – that is, the poles and wires that get electricity to homes and where it is needed. I want to acknowledge and take the time to thank the crews that have been working around the clock to ensure that power is re-established as quickly as it can be. We do need to ensure that we have got reliable power, and this bill goes part of the way to ensuring that we have resilient power now and into the future, given the high-fire-risk state that we all live in. I commend the government business program to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:45): This debate on the government business program is a debate effectively around what we expect this house to deal with over the week – over the three days – and the matters that will be debated, and I recall in the last sitting week when we spoke about the government business program I spoke about time management in this place, which I again refer to

today. In that debate I talked about the fact that I expected that the government business program would not be what was considered by the chamber, and the government members thereafter took great umbrage and tried to take the high moral ground both during that debate and for a number of days about how this chamber's time was very precious and how the government would only be dealing with what was on the government business program, which turned out not to be true. So it was right and reasonable for us to oppose the government business program on the basis that it was a big fake and the government business program would not be what this house debated.

Again we will not be supporting the government business program, because we know from the track record of this government that what they say and what they do are two very different things. We saw on the last sitting day just before this chamber rose how that was the case and how in that instance the government attempted to use the Parliament's time to deal with a sledge motion. I think we on this side of the chamber expect, as the government moves this government business program right now, that the government will try and misuse the chamber's time this week. We have absolutely no faith that what is being proposed will in any way match the outcome of the time in this chamber. In that one instance, though the government tried to move a sledge motion, unfortunately they did not think through how they would do it, and they had to listen to me debate it procedurally for an hour and a half, which I enjoyed but I do not know if they enjoyed.

What it does tell us is that when the government say they are going to do something, when they say they are going to use this chamber's time to deal with the important issues that are of concern to Victorians, those issues are not considered in the way that they should be. This house's time is precious, so we would like to hear a commitment from this government – not only some hifalutin promise that the government will be dealing with issues for Victorians but for them to actually match their commitment in terms of how they run this chamber.

Just this morning I have given notice, which will appear on the notice paper, of a motion calling for a royal commission, and I would say of all the issues this chamber could be debating this week, that motion should be attached to the government business program and it should be attached to the debate of the week – and of course it will not be. So we say to the government: $15 billion is wasted through corrupt activity, mismanaged by this government, and not a word of the issue is being considered by this Parliament this week. Can you imagine it? It is almost as if it did not happen, and I am sure the government wish that to be the case.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a debate about the government business program. I have been very clear about what items are on the agenda for the program this week, and I ask that you ask the Manager of Opposition Business to come back to the GBP.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will not uphold the point of order, in the sense that the member can give context, but please on the government business program.

James NEWBURY: I am perfectly entitled, Leader of the House, to talk about what the government should be debating, because that is what a government business program is. I can understand why the Labor Party does not want to deal with a royal commission. I can understand why they are touchy. I understand; I think we all are looking on and can see why they are touchy. But $15 billion is wasted. It should be debated this week. Of course the government wants to act like 'nothing to see here'. We will not be supporting the government business program, and we will be opposing every effort they make this week to waste the Parliament's time.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:50): By contrast, I rise to support the government business program and the motion that this house consider the three pieces of legislation which I will turn to in a moment. I note that the house commenced this week again by engaging in a condolence motion, much as we did in the previous sitting week, and there was consternation by those opposite at the end of that sitting week that so much valuable time had been spent condoling with those victims of bushfires in Victoria and also the victims of the Bondi massacre. Today again we express condolences,

to the family of Alan Scanlan, who served this place for 18 years or so between 1961 and the late 1970s. Those condolence motions are really important opportunities to reflect on the contribution that we all make in this time. Even though someone like Alan Scanlan had a long career in this place and a long period of serving his community in Oakleigh, the time here is transient. It is valuable. It is important that we focus on the issues that citizens expect of their government.

The member for Gippsland South and Leader of the Nationals mentioned in his condolence contribution that governments exist to serve the community in the ways that matter most. Indeed the government business program this week is discharging that obligation. In the form of the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025 we have a bill which seeks to ensure that we have efficient spending of government money – of taxpayer money – on the issues and service delivery that matter most to them. Without anticipating debate, while I am conscious that superannuation firms emphasise that past performance is no indicator of future performance necessarily, it is often an indicator of future performance. In previous fiscally oriented bills, those opposite have at every turn called for more spending and lower taxation, so I am really interested to see how those opposite will grapple with that challenge of ensuring that money that is raised from the citizenry of this state to be spent on public services is actually spent on the issues and on the service delivery that matter most. I look forward to their contribution without anticipating debate at all. Those opposite will have their opportunity to contribute in due course this afternoon, and I am sure they will, but I am very interested to see how they grapple with that proposition.

The Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026 goes to the heart of the need for there to be a resilient power network in this state, as the Leader of the House emphasised. We are in a fire-prone state, and today many in her community will be concerned at the fire conditions which are prevalent ahead of a front coming across Victoria later today. This bill's primary purpose, as the Leader of the House mentioned, is to ensure that Victorians can rely upon the distribution networks which serve them.

Tim Bull: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance, I believe the member is discussing and debating the contents of the bill rather than the motion.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Further to the point of order, Deputy Speaker, there is no point of order whatsoever. The member on his feet was merely outlining what the bill is about. He was not discussing the merits, therefore, of the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to continue on the government business program. The member is allowed to give context and a summary of the bill.

Iwan WALTERS: I am certainly providing that context. I note that in 2009, if that is not anticipating debate – it is now 17 years ago, if I am allowed to speak on events which took place 17 years ago – the distribution networks in Kilmore East were the source of a fire that took the lives of many dozens of Victorians in fire-prone areas. My own family live out the back of Healesville, and it is subject to regular power outages as a consequence of being at the end of a part of that distribution network, so I know that they and many other Victorians will be looking forward to the debate on the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill, because it has a bearing on the way they live their lives and their capacity to feel confident in their ability to get electricity, particularly at times of high fire risk.

Finally, the Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Supporting Stable and Strong Families) Bill 2025 really gets to the first duty of government in a civilised society. I anticipate this will be a really interesting debate. I certainly will not talk about the merits of the bill, but I acknowledge the work of Minister Blandthorn in bringing that bill to this place and the work that has been done in looking at some other jurisdictions in the world that have adopted a corporate parent model whereby everybody, really, in a community and particularly those in government have a responsibility to look

after children, particularly those in vulnerable positions. We back our frontline workers. We are serious about reforms to the early childhood sector, reforms that keep Victorian children safe.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (13:55): I rise to talk on the government business program this week, and I concur with the Manager of Opposition Business that we will be opposing the government business program once again. The one thing that is on the mind of I think every single Victorian at the moment is probably not what this government business program holds, and it is the corruption that has been outlined through the media right throughout Victoria. I think this is what we should be debating this week. As the Manager of Opposition Business stated, it is $15 billion not of our money in here but of the money of everyday Victorians. While we have the opportunity to call this out and call for a royal commission and get to the bottom of it, it is very hard to stand and actually talk on the government business program, because that is not what is on the minds of people in Victoria. I cannot stand here in good faith and represent my community, because this is the question that they are asking me to bring to Parliament to debate. You would think that with all the allegations and accusations right across our media and what mums and dads in their homes are talking about, we should have the opportunity to lay it bare and put it on the table. We are going to get an opportunity coming up shortly with question time, no doubt, but I am not sure we are going to get the answers that we want.

Moving to the government business program, there are three bills this week that are on it. The Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026, which many have alluded to and previously members have got up and spoken about, is about protecting the resilience of our poles and our wires to make sure that we have power right across the state of Victoria. Fires have ravaged the member for Euroa's electorate, and for years before that she has stood in this place and spoken about the issues that she did have with having a constant power supply into the electorate of Euroa, and that goes right around the state to everybody. We need to make sure that we are here and we are debating purposely bills that are going to make change and make our state better. I look forward to listening to the contributions of everybody that talks on the energy legislation amendment bill, knowing that the Latrobe Valley is the epicentre of producing power and that those wires and poles that we do have start in the Latrobe Valley and spread out right across Victoria.

The Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Supporting Stable and Strong Families) Bill 2025 coming up is also one that we need to be doing. As people have said, it is about protecting our most vulnerable children, and we need to make sure that we are doing the right thing there, looking after not only their needs but the needs of their families as well. The Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025, which is from the Silver review into our public sector, needs to be done. But as I close off on this government business program, it all revolves back to what is front and centre in the mind of every single Victorian today. We need to make sure that we are doing the right thing, giving the opportunity for everybody to have their say, and we need to stand up for Victoria.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Construction industry

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. What action did the Premier take after IBAC told her it did not have the powers to investigate the corruption on taxpayer-funded construction sites?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:01): The Leader of the Opposition refers to the actions I took in July of 2024, which included a referral to IBAC, a referral to Victoria Police as the independent investigative body with the tools and powers to investigate these matters and also a referral to the Fair Work Commission to review all enterprise bargaining agreements struck in the construction industry as the appropriate body that certifies and is part of the approval process for those

enterprise bargaining agreements. I respect the independence of those agencies, and I will not, as invited by the Leader of the Opposition, undermine the independence of those investigative organisations.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): Why did the Premier fail to give IBAC the 'follow the money' powers it asked for when she was informed it was unable to investigate the corruption allegations contained in the letter?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:03): In terms of the investigative body with the powers to investigate alleged criminal behaviour, we have strengthened the powers of that investigative body, being Victoria Police, to be able to investigate organised crime and to be able to follow allegations referred to.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question and being evasive in terms of not dealing with the actual substance of the question. That was not the substance of the question. It was a very specific question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has only been on her feet for a short time. Premier, come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was saying, I was asked what action was taken, and I am referring the Leader of the Opposition directly to that response. We continue to respect the independence of these investigative bodies, and I repeat the call of the administrator –

Jess Wilson: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, it was a very specific question about 'follow the money' powers.

The SPEAKER: I cannot tell the Premier how to answer the question. She was being relevant to both the substantive question and the supplementary.

Jacinta ALLAN: Consistent with the approach my government has taken, we have zero tolerance for these allegations and, consistent with that approach, we are taking action now, which is why we are referring them to Victoria Police. I acknowledge that Victoria Police, through Taskforce Hawk, have made arrests, have charged individuals and have the additional powers that they need to continue this important work. I repeat: anyone with allegations should be referring them.

Ministers statements: community safety

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:04): Like many on this side of the house, we have been listening to victims of crime. We have been listening to their experiences and understand that Victorians deserve to both be safe and feel safe. Through listening to these stories and hearing their experiences, we have taken action. We have strengthened the law to ensure that there are consequences for crimes that are causing serious concern in our communities and also that we are supporting young offenders, particularly through the violence reduction unit, in making those early interventions that are so critical to supporting young people to make a good choice – the right choice.

But also we know, alongside the work we are doing that means Victoria has the most police officers in Australia, that Victoria must be a place where every family feels safe, and we know that racism too is a crime. Racism is a crime and hurts families. It hurts children. And it is not just actions, it is words. Whether it is a bully making fun of how a young child looks – it is heartbreaking to hear those stories from those kids – or a politician calling their parents a spy, these words hurt, which is why I am proud that our government has taken action to introduce the strongest anti-hate laws in the country, because every Victorian family deserves to feel proud of who they are. They deserve to know that the law will protect and support them. There are some who opposed these anti-hate laws. There are some who prefer empty platitudes to taking real action now to support our multicultural and multifaith communities. I make this absolutely clear: I will always fight for all families and children to feel safe in this state, no matter who they are.

Construction industry

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:07): My question is to the Premier. Premier, isn't it the case that businesses represented by Mick Gatto which are Labor Party donors are still winning contracts for Victorian government worksites?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:07): Consistent with the view of the federal administrator, if anyone has allegations to make of alleged criminal behaviour, they should be making those allegations to Victoria Police.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this was a very specific question, and again the Premier is being evasive. It was a very specific question as to whether companies associated with Mick Gatto are still getting government contracts.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was answering the question. The Premier has concluded her answer.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:08): The state secretary of the Labor Party Steve Staikos is now handling tainted donations – proceeds of crime. Is the Premier refusing to call a royal commission because she wants to cover up the bribes of jet skis and utes to Big Build bosses and tainted donations to the Labor Party?

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, I ask that you rule this question out of order on the basis that it refers to party business and not government business. The Manager of Opposition Business should know better.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, this question went to the reason why the Premier is refusing to call a royal commission. That was the heart of this question.

The SPEAKER: I will allow the question.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:09): The answer is no.

Ministers statements: housing

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:09): I am delighted to say the Allan Labor government is getting on with the job of building more homes for Victorians and building stronger, safer communities in the process. Last week we released draft maps for the next 23 train and tram zone activity centres across Melbourne for community consultation and feedback. This is all about delivering more homes close to jobs, schools, shops, trains and trams, because good planning is all about community connection – connection to work, connection to services and connection to opportunity. When more Victorians can live near transport and activity centres, communities are more vibrant, local businesses are stronger and streets are safer. These zones will unlock more townhouses, more well-designed apartments and more family homes, giving Victorians more choice.

Last sitting week we backed builders, not blockers, passing landmark legislation and landmark planning reforms to speed up approvals and get homes built faster, because Victorians deserve nothing less. We are cutting red tape and taking on the status quo to deliver homes in the right places, especially for young Victorians. Meanwhile, those opposite are in complete disarray. Last week the Liberal member for Warrandyte said planning policy must support high-density apartments. Hours later –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: I can pre-empt the point of order, Manager of Opposition Business. I ask the Minister for Planning not to attack the opposition in her ministers statement.

Sonya KILKENNY: It is compare and contrast, because only hours later their own member for Malvern Amelia Hamer said high-density should not be in our suburbs.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Planning will resume her seat. I will not call the Minister for Planning to continue her ministers statement.

Construction industry

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): My question is to the Premier. Given the depth of corruption in Victoria had to be revealed by a Queensland anti-corruption inquiry, why won't the Premier call a royal commission?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:12): The simple answer is that there has been a royal commission in this country into this matter and it failed. We know that the only reason why the Victorian Liberal Party want to have a royal commission is to claw back the wages of workers. That is their true motivation.

Members interjecting.

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

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is clearly debating the question, and that is just a simple, outrageous lie.

The SPEAKER: Manager of Opposition Business, I remind you about unparliamentary language. The Premier already directed her reply at the start of her answer. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): Victorian government officials have confirmed to the Fair Work Commission that CFMEU corruption on Big Build sites has cost Victorian taxpayers $15 billion.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs withdrew from chamber.

Jess WILSON: I will start again. Victorian government officials have confirmed to the Fair Work Commission that CFMEU corruption on Big Build sites has cost Victorian taxpayers $15 billion. However, the Premier has dismissed this estimate. If it is not $15 billion, Premier, how much taxpayer money has gone into the pockets of criminals?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:14): Those claims do not stack up. They have already been dismissed by the independent administrator, and the Leader of the Opposition has revealed the true motivation in her question.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was refuting the question, I believe.

Jacinta ALLAN: Again, those claims do not stack up. That is the view of the federally appointed administrator, who has dismissed those claims and has said very clearly that they are not well founded or properly tested, and I support the work of the federal administrator.

James Newbury: On a point of order on relevance, Speaker, the question asked how much, and the Premier has not dealt with how much.

The SPEAKER: The Premier refuted the question at the commencement of her answer. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: community safety

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:15): Everyone in this chamber has seen the power of education to change lives. On this side of the chamber we know that community safety does not start in the courthouse, it starts at home and at school. Education is the single most important tool we have to keep at-risk kids on the right track. It is not rocket science. When you intervene early, have a good education, a stable home and a stable job, you can change a life. And when you change a life, you change the world. Through the violence reduction unit, we are making sure that young people remain on track. We are placing early intervention officers right throughout our school network. We are making sure at-risk kids stay off the street by expanding support for after-hours sports and activities.

The science backs this up. Having visited Glasgow and seen the violence reduction unit and visited the Harlem Children's Zone in New York, their experiences have shown that when you put early intervention officers in schools absenteeism halves and nine out of 10 kids see improved outcomes. The link between education and outcomes is irrefutable. Eighty per cent of people in prison have never completed high school. And we know rehabilitation is not the soft option, it is the hard option. That is why we are doing the hard work now to keep Victorian communities safe. We will make sure that young people know that we will support them every step of the way. If you let us, we will help you. But if you make us, we will stop you. We are on the side of hardworking families and we are on the side of making sure everyone gets to live a life of purpose.

Community safety

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (14:17): My question is to the Premier. Victoria is a proud multicultural community with generations of people migrating to Victoria seeking safety from international conflict. Why is it important that the Victorian Parliament continue to invest and legislate to ensure Victoria continues to be a proud, diverse and welcoming multicultural state?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:17): I thank the member for South Barwon for his question, because his question goes to something that I am really proud of as Premier of Victoria. I am just so proud to be the Premier of a state that people from around the world are choosing as the place that they want to live, a place where they see a future for their kids and a place that they see can support their business. Many of the people who are choosing Melbourne and Victoria come with great aspirations to run a small business, to make a contribution to our economy. Then of course there is the contribution that they make to our community as well. Again I refer to something I said last sitting week: at the Seymour relief centre, just days after the Longwood fire had commenced, there were Sikh Volunteers on the spot immediately, serving meals to the community. They had travelled all the way from Langwarrin to come there. When another community needed them, they were there. This is the power of what we offer as a state to families around the globe – that we are a place where you can live your life, you can raise your family, you can get a great education, you can be treated in our public health system and you can be supported to be safe.

Earlier in question time I went to why the anti-vilification laws that we have passed through this Parliament are just so important, because they reinforce that promise that we deliver to families around the globe. Alongside access to great public services that only Labor governments invest in – good schools and good hospitals, like the beautiful new Footscray Hospital, which is opening tomorrow – we also understand that the central role of government is to keep the community safe. Alongside having the largest police force in the country, we also know that the law needed to be strengthened to support people to practise their faith, practise their culture and be who they are, free from hate. We have seen too much hate. We have seen too much conflict here as a result of conflict overseas. But we have also seen too much conflict being driven by some in leadership positions who are choosing to divide us even further, who are choosing division. It is Lunar New Year. Today is the start of the Year of the Horse. I was proud to stand with the Vietnamese community at midnight last night. But I say

this: today I am not meeting with One Nation. I am not cuddling up to One Nation and leaving open the door. I will always stand with our multicultural community.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Narracan can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Narracan withdrew from chamber.

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (14:20): Why is it important that the Victorian Parliament continues to show leadership and reject the politics of division and hate?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:21): It is important simply because of this: we have leadership positions, and those of us in leadership positions – Premiers, leaders of political parties, ministers and every single one of us as members of Parliament – have a choice to make. The choice I will always make is to support and strengthen our great diversity in this state, to protect people from hate and to support them to be who they are. Others take a different path, and we have seen that in their opposing of the strongest anti-hate laws in this nation, like the Liberal Party did when they had a choice. We are seeing that choice again being writ large, a choice to leave the door open to dealing with One Nation, who as a political movement have hurt communities. They have told me about the hurt that they feel. I choose to stand with those communities.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this is an outrageous abuse from a government that is in bed with the Greens.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ministers statements: Victoria Police

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (14:22): I would like to take this opportunity to update the house on the fine work of Victoria Police members across the summer right across our state. In particular we have seen, with Operation Pulse, some 100 disruptive people being booted from our shopping centres across Melbourne and the suburbs, some 109 arrests, 30 weapons seized and 215 offences detected thanks to a $2.4 million program funded to support Victoria Police in the deployment of additional PSOs and police across our shopping centre network at Northland, at Highpoint and at Fountain Gate.

I would also like to pick up on the fact that the redistribution and the redeployment of PSOs across the transport network has seen this intelligence-led model put more police and more PSOs where the crime is in our community to provide confidence and support to communities, to our transport users and to our local businesses as well, who provide great support around those transport hubs.

Can I also acknowledge, as the member for Mordialloc would be aware and the member for Albert Park as well, Operation Summersafe. Police presence has been strong to make sure that people who are out having a great time can do so being supported to do that safely. We have also seen, thanks to Minister Dimopoulos, the great work at our major events and activities, very significant work around our major events, and police presence for all of those. On road safety, a $21 million boost in the budget has seen some 328,000 breath tests and 9000 drug tests done across the summer period.

I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge some very significant community events and international visitors last week. We saw police oversee some 15,000 protesters across two events in Melbourne and large community activities, all done with one arrest – a very big contrast to what we saw interstate because of the ideological view of the Institute of Public Affairs and others who think permits are the answer to stop community division.

Construction industry

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:24): My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, how do jobs reserved for state-sponsored strippers on Big Build sites show respect to women?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Women) (14:24): I thank the member for her question. The Premier has been very clear on this matter, as I will be right now. This behaviour is absolutely unacceptable, and it is why our Premier took such decisive action back in 2024 when she vowed that we would do everything that we could in order to stamp out the rotten culture that had taken root in our building industry. Since that time of course it has been a federal Labor government that appointed an administrator to the CFMEU, and we back the administrator for the work that he has done to get rid of the bad actors who were found to be at work in the building and construction industry.

On this side of the house we stand every single day for working people and the right of all working people to go to a workplace that is safe and one where they are respected regardless of their gender, their sex, their faith or their background. We have always stood resolutely in defence of working people. What is more, we have always stood in defence of the right of all workers to organise in unions. But we expect that those unions will always act in the best interests of their membership, and when they do not what we have seen is strong and decisive action taken by a Labor government.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for South-West Coast can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for South-West Coast withdrew from chamber.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I might say, that was after many failed attempts by previous federal Liberal governments, who talked a big game, who established a royal commission and who achieved zip from that royal commission.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister has reverted to type and is now choosing to attack the Liberal Party rather than respond to the question, and I ask you to bring her back to the question: how does employing strippers respect women?

The SPEAKER: I am aware of the question, member for Lowan. You do not need to repeat the question in your point of order. The minister to continue. The minister was being relevant.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I think I have been entirely relevant to the question. At the very outset I expressed the outrage that is felt by all of those on this side of the house. We will not stand by when women are disrespected in the workplace, and that is why we have taken decisive action every step of the way and at all times that we have held government in this place. We will always work to protect working people, unlike those on the other side of the house, whose history is one of stripping away the rights and entitlements of working people.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:28): Geoffrey Watson's report reveals that Big Build sites are 'incredibly awful' and 'dangerous for women'. Why has the minister failed to keep women safe on Big Build construction sites?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Women) (14:28): It is our government that has proudly implemented a range of initiatives right across our building projects to ensure that women have every opportunity to work in the construction industry and to access jobs and careers that have previously been denied them. It is our government that has taken decisive action to ensure that other people who have not always been represented in –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is not being responsive. This is a very unsafe workplace where strippers have been brought in to excite the male workers.

The SPEAKER: I am not sure what your point of order is, member for Lowan.

Emma Kealy: I ask you to bring her back to that.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I will conclude by saying that on this side of the house we have worked assiduously to ensure that the investments that we have made in building public infrastructure create jobs and opportunities for women, for First Nations people, for people living with disability and for people from multicultural backgrounds, and we will continue to do so.

Ministers statements: public transport

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:29): On this side of the house we understand that better public transport means making it easier and safer for Victorians to get around. That is why we have been building more public transport connections across our train and tram networks, with record investment in bus services as well. More public transport services means less dangerous traffic congestion. It means Victorians do not have to rely on a car, which we know can be costly to run and to own, and it means making it easier for people in the outer suburbs or rural and regional areas to head into our vibrant, bustling and very proud major events capital. And I look at Minister Dimopoulos when I say that.

Labor has added more than 3500 train services, about 24,000 bus services and about 230 tram services operating every week, and we are making it more affordable too – free for kids under the age of 18 every day and free for seniors, disability support pensioners and carer card holders on weekends. We continue to make our public transport network safer, with new CCTV along the Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo corridors, more than 100 extra authorised officers, expanding the successful community connectors program from Dandenong now to Frankston as well and activating spaces through retail offerings at our brand new Metro Tunnel stations, as well as with things like better lighting not only at stations but along footpaths for that last mile.

To most Victorians it is pretty obvious that more public transport options makes life easier, and giving safe transport connections is important. But the Liberals are not like most Victorians. They cut services, they close train stations –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, again a minister today is abusing their ministers statement. It is not an opportunity to attack the opposition.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Speaker, on the point of order, rulings in this place have made it clear that it is entirely appropriate to compare and contrast the position of the government in relation to those who seek to hold government in this place.

The SPEAKER: I ask the minister to come back to her statement without attacking the opposition.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: Some will cut services, close train stations and shut down train lines. The Kennett philosophy made life harder for Victorians.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is just an abuse, and the minister has ignored your ruling.

The SPEAKER: The minister referred to 'some' in her last comments.

Constituency questions

Brighton electorate

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:33): (1498) My constituency question is to the Premier, and I ask: why did the Premier thumb her nose at my community by refusing to consult on her plan to scrap train station car parking across Brighton? The state Labor government has announced its plan to scrap the train station car parks at Middle Brighton and North Brighton to allow developers to build high-rise apartments there. These two railway station car parks serve a wide Bayside catchment, and the car parks allow our community to park and ride on the train. Scrapping the car parks without any parking alternative is short sighted and takes away the commonsense need for commuters to be able to park at train stations. Additionally, our community was never consulted before the public announcement was

made. It is another example of this state Labor government attacking my community simply because the Premier does not like Bayside and wants to stuff high-rise apartments wherever she can. The plan to scrap train station car parks should be scrapped and the parking maintained.

Wendouree electorate

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (14:34): (1499) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education regarding the Allan Labor government's Glasses for Kids program. How many families in my electorate of Wendouree have benefited from the 10,000 pairs of free glasses that have now been provided to primary school students across Victoria? Our Glasses for Kids program is a significant saving for families, who are saving up to $600, depending on the type of vision issue. The program is now available at 770 eligible schools and to 74,000 more prep to year 3 students through to 2027. I am proud that the Labor government tripled the program with a $6.8 million expansion in the Victorian budget 2024–25, and I believe this investment is making a real difference in addressing cost-of-living concerns for many families across the Ballarat community. I look forward to hearing the response from the minister and welcoming him to Ballarat.

Ovens Valley electorate

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:35): (1500) My question is to the Minister for Energy and Resources, and I ask the question on behalf of Caroline Reilly, who lives with her 80-year-old husband in Yarrawonga and is most concerned with the constant power outages over this summer period. My question to the minister is: why does half of Yarrawonga township lose power on excessive heat days and the other half of Yarrawonga remains unaffected? At one stage, having seven consecutive days over 42 degrees with power outages was just unacceptable. We had elderly people and pregnant women needing to relocate to Melbourne and Echuca to ensure they were not going to be affected by the regular power blackouts – some blackouts were 6 to 8 hours and longer; some were only 30 minutes to 2 hours – during 40-degree heat weather. This must be fixed by next summer. The townships of Bundalong and Wilby were also adversely affected.

Lara electorate

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (14:36): (1501) My question is also to the Minister for Education. How many children in the Lara electorate have benefited from our government's Glasses for Kids program? This program is so incredibly important, as it ensures that every prep to grade 3 student at participating schools is eligible to receive free vision screening and, if required, further eye testing and free glasses. This program supports families with the cost of eye care in a convenient, school-based vision screening and testing service. As someone who needed glasses when I was younger and in school, I understand the barriers that vision impairment can cause and the improved student learning and engagement outcomes that come when you can finally see again. That is why I am so proud that our government has introduced the Glasses for Kids program and that it is supporting students from across the Lara electorate to ensure that vision impairment is not affecting their lifelong learning capabilities.

Ringwood electorate

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:36): (1502) My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. When will the buildings at Marlborough Primary School be upgraded? Marlborough Primary in Heathmont is an important and much-loved part of my community. The school is supported by a strong leadership team, dedicated staff and an engaged school community who are working hard every day to deliver excellent outcomes for students. However, the school's infrastructure has not kept pace with modern standards. Many of the buildings are ageing and this places the leadership, staff and school community in a difficult position as they strive to provide contemporary learning environments with facilities that are simply no longer fit for purpose. Our children deserve safe, modern and well-maintained classrooms that match the quality of teaching taking place inside them. Investment in local schools is an investment in the future of our community. The Marlborough Primary community is seeking clear advice about when upgrades to these school buildings will occur.

Werribee electorate

John LISTER (Werribee) (14:37): (1503) My question is to the Minister for Community Sport. How can the Allan Labor government support clubs and organisations in Wyndham, specifically my communities in the west of the municipality, to encourage more participation in organised sport? My electorate is a growing community, with many younger families looking for ways to connect and be active. The Allan Labor government has supported this through different investment in new public parks like Manor Lakes North Reserve, which I visited only a few weeks ago, as well as programs to increase shared user agreements with our state schools and local sports organisations. Active spaces do allow informal and unstructured physical activity, but we know that organised sport is also important. Only 10 per cent of Wyndham residents participate in organised sport or recreation. To our summer sports finishing up for the season, congratulations on all your success. To our winter sports – like Manor Lakes, Wyndham Vale, Glen Orden, Werribee Centrals and Werribee Districts and the football–netball clubs there, as well as our basketball clubs – all the best with the upcoming season.

Prahran electorate

Rachel WESTAWAY (Prahran) (14:38): (1504) My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning. Why is the minister overriding a plan that exceeds her own housing targets and that will strip the village heart out of Windsor, Prahran and Hawksburn? Our community supports more housing. Young people in Prahran deserve the chance to live in the community they love, not to be priced out of it. We want development, but we want it done right. Stonnington City Council already has a plan that does exactly that. It was built with the community and not imposed on them. It delivers 67,000 additional dwellings by 2051; that is 17,000 more homes than the government's own target. Yet the government has released draft activity centre maps for South Yarra, Prahran, Windsor, Hawksburn and Toorak proposing six to 16 storeys in cores and three to six storeys spread across residential streets up to 800 metres from stations. Council was not even briefed before these maps hit the media.

Geelong electorate

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (14:39): (1505) My constituency question is to the Minister for Small Business and Employment. My question is: what assistance is being provided by the Victorian government to our growing multicultural communities, who need support to host gatherings and to create opportunities for inclusion and social connection in Geelong? Geelong West has a strong history of multicultural groups sharing their culture, and this is clearly evidenced at the annual Pako Festa with a parade of multicultural communities along Pakington Street. Pako Festa is the largest multicultural community festival and attracts thousands of people every year for its wonderful costumes, music, dance and food, and it is a celebration of our multicultural city. More so than ever we need to keep multiculturalism alive and strong and build on what we have by hosting more gatherings, more events and integrated art and to create opportunities for inclusion and social connections, and Pakington Street is the place to do it. I look forward to hearing from the minister.

Euroa electorate

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (14:40): (1506) My question is to the Premier. How will the government restore a universal coordinated clean-up so every fire-affected Victorian can recover safely and fairly? Families across Euroa electorate are still living with the physical scars of the 2026 bushfires more than five weeks on. Burnt homes, asbestos debris and unsafe structures remain weeks later. But they are being told that if they were responsible enough to insure their home, they are excluded from the state clean-up. For more than a decade Victoria took a universal approach so communities could recover quickly and safely. Instead this year Labor has created a two-tier emergency response that many residents feel taxes them twice and punishes them for doing the right thing. People are being quoted tens of thousands of dollars just to clear debris. That strips rebuild money from insurance payouts, slows recovery and is already pushing some residents to attempt dangerous clean-ups themselves, which increases the environmental risks when properties are cleared

piecemeal. It is inequitable, it creates a moral hazard and it divides communities street by street and town by town.

Box Hill electorate

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (14:41): (1507) My question is to the Minister for Small Business and Employment. How is the Victorian government supporting the growth of multicultural business precincts such as Box Hill? Often referred to as Melbourne's second CBD, the Box Hill business precinct is an incredibly vibrant and dynamic part of the Box Hill community that is powered by a diverse range of local small businesses, many of which are operated by members of our Chinese community. Many small businesses in Box Hill are family businesses, with multiple generations of family members working long hours to ensure that their doors stay open and that the business can continue to provide a service to their community. Supporting multicultural business precincts like Box Hill is essential for continuing to grow the local economy and to assist in creating a supportive environment where small businesses can thrive.

Bridget Vallence: Speaker, I have a point of order on a number of unanswered questions dating back to May 2025, over 270 days overdue. They are questions unanswered by the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs: questions on notice numbers 3069, 3070, 3071, 3072, 3073, 3074, 3075, 3076, 3077, 3078, 3079 and 3080. Overdue questions to the Minister for Finance are questions on notice 3026, 3027, 3028, 3029, 3030, 3031, 3032, 3033 and 3034. An overdue question to the Treasurer – and this is the one that dates back to May 2025 – is question on notice 2421. Also to the Treasurer are questions on notice 2512, 2777, 2853, 2854, 2855, 2856, 2857 and 2858, and still to the Treasurer are questions on notice 2859, 2860, 2861 and 2862. Overdue questions to the Minister for Government Services are questions on notice 2763, 2764, 2765 and 2776. An overdue question to the Premier is constituency question 1442, and an overdue question to the Minister for Environment is constituency question 1458. I would appreciate responses for my constituents, and I will provide this list to the clerks.

The SPEAKER: Please supply the list to the Clerk.

Gabrielle de Vietri: On a point of order, Speaker, I have unanswered questions I am waiting on responses to: questions on notice 935, 936, 937 and 1567, all to the Minister for Consumer Affairs; questions on notice 2799 and 2800 to the Minister for Housing and Building; constituency question 1426 to the Minister for Mental Health; and adjournment question 1485 to the Premier. I would appreciate responses for my constituents.

The SPEAKER: Could you also pass your list to the Clerk, please.

Business of the house

Program

Debate resumed.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (14:45): As I was saying before we went to question time, the people of Victoria have every single right to ask why we are not debating today where their money has gone, where the money they have paid in tax to the government has gone – the $15 billion that has been funnelled into criminal activities with the tunnel.

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (14:45): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to contribute on the government business program, acknowledging that there is a lot of work going on here in our Parliament. I am so pleased and proud, as always, to be able to participate in debates and make contributions on the important bills. I did want to reflect that at the very beginning of the day – it does seem like a while ago, but it was actually only a couple of hours ago – we were able to consider the messages from the Legislative Council on the important legislation that has passed in that place as

well, deep and considered contributions having already been made in this chamber. So much work is going on to pass important legislation.

This week of course, as in every week when we have an Allan Labor government, there is a lot to consider. We are going to be considering legislation from our very hardworking Minister for Energy and Resources. How many pieces of legislation have been brought to this Parliament by the Minister for Energy and Resources I am not sure, but I will make a mental note to go and find out. Once again we have legislation that goes to the very heart of making sure that our energy system is fit for purpose and that we are able to have a resilient network. In my community there is, as I know there is in yours, Speaker, a total fire ban. There is still so much work that is going on after the extraordinary bushfires and the recovery that is part of that. As part of that we do need to make sure that we are continuing to have a resilient network, and the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026 will consider the work that needs to be done by the energy sector to assist the state to replace coal as it is retired and place control of transmission planning back into the state's hands.

Our very hardworking Minister for Children, Ms Blandthorn in the other place, has brought another important piece of legislation for our consideration. This legislation speaks to the absolute, primary responsibility we have to look after our most vulnerable. The Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Supporting Stable and Strong Families) Bill 2025 looks to some of the state's most vulnerable children, particularly children in the child protection system. The minister has had a laser light focus on ensuring that we take a whole-of-government approach, and that does mean that we have responsibilities across many spheres of government, including the Chief Commissioner of Police, ministers and other department heads, to ensure that our stable and strong families scheme does have a focus on making sure that our young people – particularly, as I said, those who are in the child protection system – have the best care possible. It gives me an opportunity to thank, in this context, our educators, who I know in so many ways are the first line of defence and are the ones who are often heightened in making sure that our children, youth and families amendment legislation is enacted in a way that is in the best interests of those children in the child protection system.

Finally, this week we have the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. That legislation does of course consider changes across government. The bill offers sensible measures to responsibly reduce spending, unlike the types of cuts that those opposite would deliver if they were given the opportunity. The Liberal–National–One Nation coalition, if given the opportunity, would, as we know, cut to the bone. It is part of the DNA of those opposite. The bill that will be before us, the entities legislation amendment bill, by contrast will ensure that we do take a measured and responsible approach across government. That means making sure that any duplication is considered – any changes to advisory bodies or those other bodies that are being duplicated and replicated across government – and that we do have a look at what can be done sustainably so that our community can continue to function, with government services absolutely supporting those that need them, but not being irrational and having the consequences that would happen if those opposite were able to get control.

Chris CREWTHER (Mornington) (14:50): I rise to speak on the government business program. Once again, as outlined as well by the member for Brighton earlier, we have a program that reflects a Labor government more focused on tidying up political risk and distracted rather than doing what Victorians need most and owning up to where they have gone wrong. This week it is impossible to separate this program before the house from what Victorians have learned about more corruption and the distorted culture within the CFMEU and others within the framework of this Labor government. We have seen intimidation, criminality and more that have been allowed to fester. While this government asks Parliament to wave through several changes this week, including more reductions of independent scrutiny, Victorians have had to waste $15 billion of taxpayer money – that is $15 billion of hard-earned money paid to this government by taxpayers – which has been ripped out of their

pockets by corrupt CFMEU overlords, enabled by a negligent and permissive Labor government, with the Labor Party benefiting from this corruption and being silent.

On the legislation itself before us this week, I will start with the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025.

Sarah Connolly: On a point of order, Speaker, you would think after almost four years in this place that the member for Mornington would understand the rules of the government business program. I ask you to draw his attention back to the program that is before the house and that we are talking about this afternoon.

The SPEAKER: Member for Laverton, please raise your point of order succinctly. The member for Mornington to come back to the government business program before the house.

Chris CREWTHER: I will continue talking about the entities bill, which is part of the government business program this week. In this bill, most concerning are measures that reduce independent oversight. Firstly, the bill pares back the role of the Essential Services Commission in areas that directly affect household costs, including rate capping and pricing oversight –

The SPEAKER: Member for Mornington, I ask you not to go into the detail of the bill.

Chris CREWTHER: Indeed, Speaker. Removing the independent umpire increases the risk of lobbying and weakens specialist scrutiny. I note that with this bill, which members will speak about this week, it is especially concerning given the total failures of oversight we have seen this week, with $15 billion of taxpayer funds spent on lap dances, strippers and more. That is about $5000 per taxpayer, which the Labor government obviously does not want to hear about –

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Speaker: relevance.

The SPEAKER: I ask you to come back to the government business program once again, member for Mornington.

Chris CREWTHER: It is of course important to contrast these bills with what is happening in this state at the moment. Now I want to move to –

The SPEAKER: Member for Mornington, this is the government business program. You need to speak to the government business program.

Chris CREWTHER: Now I want to turn to the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. The government has been unwilling to be transparent about the cost impacts on consumer bills. Members who will be speaking on this bill and debating this bill this week will be talking about provisions that risk weakening planning and environmental safeguards through transitional shortcuts, and members will speak about program changes being advanced without key reviews being publicly released, fuelling the impression of policy being made on the run. This is at a time of rising cost-of-living pressures and a government that has made them even worse by cutting services and raising taxes. And then we find out, as mentioned before, that they have totally wasted $15 billion. The last bill that is before us this week –

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, if he cannot speak to it, he should sit down.

The SPEAKER: Member for Point Cook, it is not your position to tell the Speaker how to rule on another member. Member for Mornington, come back to the government business program.

Chris CREWTHER: Now we move to the last bill that is part of this government business program this week, the Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Supporting Stable and Strong Families) Bill 2025. This is a bill which is about vulnerable children in the child protection system, their families and care leavers, recognising that outcomes are shaped across housing, health, education and justice, not just child protection. This is at the same time that this government is leaving vulnerable

children in their cars on our foreshores and elsewhere, such as on the Mornington Peninsula in the electorates of Nepean and Mornington, which have the highest rate of rough sleeping in the state.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (51): Juliana Addison, 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, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, 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, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (25): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, 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, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Housing

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:01): When it comes to housing, Labor keep moving the goalposts because they cannot meet their targets. We have seen this time and time again. A big launch saying that this government were going to build 80,000 homes; they could not get there, so they changed the goalposts to 800,000 homes over 10 years. We know the only way to get there is with a Wilson Liberal government that will deliver that housing. We will not get it under Labor. We have 100,000 permits vacant. You cannot live in a permit. We need the homes. This government is not building homes, only dishing out permits. We saw the Minister for Planning, the member for Carrum, turn up at the announcement in Caulfield to launch the new section of their activity centres and could not even get the street right. She called it Station Road in Caulfield rather than Station Street. If this planning minister does not even know what the streets are, how are they going to build homes? The Stop the Elsternwick Towers people gave a good shout-out, because the minister turned up to the activity centre – that already is an activity centre, 12-plus storeys – to make more announcements. This government is all spin, no substance, no houses, and it will be the Liberals that will provide choice and voice for all Victorians for better housing and better choices to get Victoria started.

Pakenham electorate infrastructure

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (15:02): Recently the Leader of the Opposition came to visit Pakenham. Her statement on her social media pages, where she bizarrely claimed that our government has not invested in infrastructure, got me pretty confused. She obviously did not see any of the schools and early education centres that we built: Kuyim, Kurmile, Kurrun and Boollam Boollam, and they are just a few. Nor did she see our community hospital, which is being constructed at a rapid pace, or two brand new train stations.

I would be interested to know what road she took to get into Pakenham, as there is a very good chance that we have probably upgraded it in the last couple of years or are currently doing so. In fact, when it comes to roads in Pakenham, if our government is criticised on anything, it is probably for doing too much, not too little. I will read a few of the comments that she received on her own page:

> Is this satire? I live here and the biggest complaint is too many upgrades are happening simultaneously causing traffic congestion.

They literally just built a hospital

Hope you saw that magnificent and massive new rail infrastructure near Pakenham. Absolutely brilliant.

Can you please list infrastructure previous lnp governments have built please

To be fair, she did get one point right: Pakenham is a fast-growing community, and we do deserve infrastructure. I am proud to represent this great community and stand for the Labor government, who have heavily invested in my electorate.

Australia Day

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (15:04): One of the privileges of this job is celebrating the people who hold our communities together. This year's Australia Day honours recognised some remarkable locals: Kilmore's Reg Cleland OAM for a lifetime supporting equestrian sport and generations of riders, and while we are not related, I happily do not correct people when they think we are; Seymour's Christine Welsh OAM, who has stood on the front line of more emergencies than many of us would wish keeping others safe and, despite not being a hugger, has still managed to give me a few; Avenel's Vivian Beaumont OAM for his lifelong contribution to agricultural shows; Kelvin View's Di Mackrell OAM, who seems to have taught half the district and shaped far more lives than she would ever admit; and Nagambie's Gerry Ryan AO, whose impact on sport, tourism and philanthropy is felt both locally and right across the country. To each of them and their families, thank you. You make regional Victoria what it is.

Euroa electorate lawn bowls

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (15:05): Yesterday I brought some other legends from the region to Parliament, hosting bowlers from 12 Euroa electorate clubs for the third annual Cleeland bowls tournament on the Parliament Garden green, the oldest operating green in Victoria. In small towns sport is not just recreation, it is connection. Congratulations to winners Wendy and Michael Szczykulski from Seymour VRI and runners-up Peter Cunningham and Robert Dashwood from Heathcote. A special shout-out to my mate Pete for pulling it all together year after year. It was a great day and a reminder that this Parliament belongs to the communities that we represent.

Norm Gibbs Community Leadership Award

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (15:06): Last time we were here I tried to get out all of the Norm Gibbs Community Leadership Award recipients. I am going to give it another go, so: Michael Looi from Holy Family primary school, Patrick Muller from Parkhill Primary School, Jimmy Boys from Mount Waverley Secondary, Nicci Rudge from Glen Iris Primary, Caitlin Mujie from Avila College, Alyn Anuchiracheeva from Mount Waverley North Primary School, Ira Veer from Essex Heights Primary School, Abel Ebi Joseph from Salesian College, Taviru Perera from Syndal South Primary School, Ryan Lim from Ashwood High School, Hayden Trevaskis from Camberwell South Primary School, Amaya Wijesiri from Solway Primary School, Lily Gault from Mount Waverley Primary School, Nirisha Guduru from Huntingtower school, and Patricia Gardner-Dryden and Jadyn Katz from Ashwood School.

This award is named after Norm Gibbs. Norm is a legend around Monash. He was Zodo the Clown at the Monash Children's Hospital for years. Norm is 98, by the way. Norm and his wife are celebrating their 75th wedding anniversary today. Norm is unfortunately not too well – he is in care at Cabrini at the moment. I am sure I can speak on behalf of the house to wish Norm and Topsy a very happy anniversary and say thank you for everything they do. The man was signing 40,000 signatures as a justice of the peace up until the age of 92. He was Zodo the Clown until 91. He is on every life membership list of every volunteer group in our area. That is why we name community leadership after Norm: because not all heroes wear capes.

Construction industry

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (15:07): Recently I spent time with Bulleen locals hearing about a number of issues which they are very concerned about in relation to the North East Link, particularly dust, noise, and water pressure in Elizabeth Street, in Austin Street and in Derwent Square. A number of these locals have been voicing these issues and concerns on social media. But as a number of them wanted to show me and did show me, when they have taken to social media they are being heavily bullied. These people are clearly associated with the union movement on Big Build sites that are –

Members interjecting.

Matthew GUY: Really? You want to bag local people for raising issues in relation to sexism, racist abuse and death threats, including people saying, 'Go and make a noose for yourself'? This is the kind of disgraceful behaviour that I think locals are, rightfully, very, very angry about, and more to the point would be very angry that Labor members would be defending. But it is not surprising that Labor members would defend the disgraceful action of union members abusing local people on social media. Why wouldn't they defend them when $15 billion goes missing from Big Build sites, primarily to bikie gangs via the CFMEU, and the Labor government goes quiet and says there is no problem, no need for an inquiry and no need for a royal commission? This government is corrupt.

Greensborough housing

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Creative Industries) (15:09): My residents are concerned about the operation of a pending social and affordable housing development in Greensborough in my electorate. It has been reported that Together Housing (Victoria) Ltd has been funded to deliver this development, which consists of more than 200 dwellings. This organisation is somehow registered with the social housing regulator but does not seem to have ever run social housing. It appears to have no staff, no income and no assets or expenses. Remember that in Victoria only not-for-profits can register as community housing organisations. Its directors are listed on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website as Brodie Commens, Ryan Slocombe and Stephen McDonough, and Terrene Searle is the secretary and public officer. All just happen to also be principals or directors at private capital investment firm Tetris Capital. I note that Together Housing has engaged a longstanding community housing provider to actually run the housing at Greensborough.

I believe the creation of Together Housing Ltd can be one of two things. Firstly, it might be a small group of people with experience in funding housing developments who are wanting to simply apply their skills to help people in housing. If this is the case, I am not sure why they would not have joined an existing community housing organisation to help out, but this is one possible scenario. The other option is that Together Housing is an artifice to allow people to make profit from the funding that is available for not-for-profits to provide social and affordable housing. This would be completely unacceptable, and I am going to devote significant effort and time to exposing any money that flows back to these individuals or Tetris, whether it be through management fees, financing arrangements or any other means.

Construction industry

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (15:10): I am outraged by the waste and mismanagement we continue to see from the Allan Labor government. Last week's explosive report *Rotting from the Top* laid bare something every Victorian should be furious about: the money you and we all pay in taxes, money meant for hospitals, schools, roads and keeping us safe instead being siphoned off to bikies and organised crime through the now notorious Big Build project. I will bet we will not see the Premier posing in her hard hat now. And what does the Premier say? That people do not care about corruption? Well, our community in South-West Coast care. We care because every dollar wasted is a dollar stolen from our community. The sums involved are so staggering they are almost impossible to comprehend. It equates to $5000 at least per household – $5000 and probably more. This is why we

do not have enough for basic services every government has a fundamental responsibility to provide. We should have more nurses, police officers and teachers. We should have services strengthened, roads repaired, public houses built and our vulnerable community supported. Instead we are left missing out. Our region, our state, our people, are being short changed by a tired, arrogant state Labor government that seem to have forgotten who they actually serve.

John Philips

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (15:11): I rise today to acknowledge the passing of John Philips, a former mayor and councillor of the City of Ballarat. John represented Learmonth ward and North ward from 2008 to 2015, serving our community with integrity and dedication. John was elected mayor of the City of Ballarat in 2014. During his time as mayor John and his wife Michelle played an important role in establishing Ballarat's sister city relationship with Yangzhou in China in 2015, which was renewed in 2019 and 2025. Beyond his civic leadership, John contributed more than 51 years of service to the Country Fire Authority as both a firefighter and a health and safety representative, beginning his service in March 1974, an extraordinary contribution to his community, Ballarat and our region. My sincerest condolences go to his wife Michelle, their children Jessica, Lisa, Emma and Daniel and their extended family and friends. May they take comfort in the legacy John leaves behind and the impact he made on the Ballarat community. Vale, John Philips.

Ballarat community events

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (15:13): We have so much to celebrate in Ballarat. I acknowledge the tremendous work behind the diverse range of recent community events, including mosque open day, the Pongal festival, the Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial commemorative service, the Ballarat Gift, the Ballarat Lunar New Year concert, the Ballarat Nepali Football Club tournament and Maha Shivratri. My heartfelt thanks go to the volunteers whose time and energy make these events such a success.

Construction industry

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (15:13): Everyone in this place should always have the people of Victoria's best interests at heart to make a better life for the people that we represent, and that is why I came to this place. Under the Allan Labor government Victoria is drowning in debt. We are in a cost-of-living crisis and people are struggling daily to put a roof over their head and food on the table and to make ends meet. Under Premier Allan and this Labor government at least $15 billion of hard-earned taxpayers money, $5000 per household, has been lost to rorts on Victorian major projects, the vast majority of which has ended up in the hands of organised criminals and bikies. This is the biggest rort that this state has ever seen. It is shameful, and this misconduct must be investigated with a royal commission. If this happened in any other workplace across the nation, those responsible would be held accountable. Victorian taxpayers deserve answers as to why the Premier and the Labor government turned a blind eye on crime and corruption. $15 billion could have built 30,000 new homes in the midst of a housing crisis. Just last week I was told of a woman sleeping in her car with her two children. Shame on Jacinta Allan and the Labor government for the increasing numbers of homeless. $15 billion should have gone towards the completion of the GV Health redevelopment, which is currently only 50 per cent completed, and to fix the unsafe crumbling roads and fix the state's health crisis.

Narre Warren North electorate schools

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (15:14): I am here to talk about schools, schools and more schools, because we are the Education State. I had the pleasure of turning the sod at James Cook Primary School in Endeavour Hills. Anne and her team are absolutely beside themselves about the amazing upgrade that the Allan Labor government is giving our area. We are upgrading and modernising the school to give students a better learning space. We are constructing a single-storey

classroom and admin building out the front of the school, and we are refurbishing all the old buildings at the back, which is going to be absolutely amazing.

At Southern Cross Primary we are building an inclusive outdoor space, which will give children of all abilities new ways to socialise, develop and learn through play. We are also upgrading the school's hardcourt, and this includes replacing the basketball courts, retaining wall fence and basketball and netball hoops. Fountain Gate Secondary College, Maramba Primary School, Chalcot Lodge Primary School and Thomas Mitchell Primary School have all received a quarter of a million dollars to upgrade their bathrooms, which is part of our capital works funding program. Hallam Primary School have been given some money for planning to build a new learning facility, which is just about ready to go. We really enjoyed that process. At Fleetwood Primary School we have upgraded their bathrooms, with new water fountains and a brand new fence around the school too. And let us not forget Hallam Secondary College: $24.2 million allocated, a new builder appointed, just about to turn the sod on that. We on this side of the fence do not cut Fresh Fruit Friday, we invest in education, because we are the Education State.

Government performance

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (15:16): Labor's corruption tax has cost Victorians at least $15 billion, maybe $30 billion. On the $15 billion figure, that is $5000 per household for Labor's corruption tax at the hands of the CFMEU. All the while, within the district of Sandringham, in Hampton and Highett and Beaumaris and Black Rock and Mentone and Cheltenham, these hardworking Victorian families are being rammed with the highest taxes in the country, the highest state taxes in the country, the highest property taxes and the highest amount of debt.

In the meantime the infrastructure that our community both needs and deserves is being abandoned by this government. The gas and fuel land should be kept for community use. Sandringham College desperately needs an upgrade, as do Beaumaris Primary and Beaumaris North Primary. The level crossing removal in Highett – my goodness, the government should stop and talk to the community before progressing that any further. Latrobe Street should be kept open. Bay Road should be subjected to a traffic study. It is getting too much for local residents. There should be access improvements to Sandringham station. And more investment is needed in Sandringham Hospital, the heart of our community. Prioritising things is a decision by government, a decision of government, government being a privilege – a privilege that has been wasted by the Australian Labor Party for 11, almost 12 years in this state.

Melton electorate schools

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (15:18): The 2026 school year is already off to a flyer in Melton with the opening of two new public schools, including the first Melton public secondary school to open in a few decades, as well as a new early learning centre. It was fantastic to have the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education out in Melton to officially open these incredible schools. Murrum Primary School in Weir Views has 400 eager students enrolled for the 2026 year. Murrum is a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung word meaning 'joeys'. Principal Samantha Fleming, with her 22 years of experience in education, has done a mountain of work to ensure this school is operational from day one, and the community is lucky to welcome another principal with huge passion for education and community.

Kolorer College is Melton's first brand new secondary school to open in decades. The name Kolorer is a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung word meaning 'lava flow'. Kolorer is one of the most impressive schools I have ever seen. The school grounds have been thoughtfully designed, and the facilities will foster growth and inspire minds. Principal Ciar Foster has a wealth of knowledge and experience, and her passion for student growth and education is strong. I look forward to watching this school community flourish under her leadership.

The Allan Labor government made a clear commitment to delivering 100 new government schools between 2019 and 2026. We have opened five new public schools in Melton across seven years.

Murrum and Kolorer are just two of the 19 new schools opening across Victoria for term 1. At the start of term 1 this year we delivered on that promise. When those opposite were in office they cut $1 billion from education. On this side of the house, we back our schools, our teachers and Victorian families.

Homelessness

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (15:19): On census night more than 30,000 Victorians were recorded as experiencing homelessness. We know that number is conservative. The census undercounts rough sleepers and hidden homelessness. People sleeping in cars, on couches, in unsafe and unstable arrangements are routinely missed. The real figure is higher, and behind every number is a human being failed by the system. For years governments have managed homelessness rather than ended it. We have funded crisis beds, commissioned reports and issued strategies. Yet rough sleeping persists, and the housing register now exceeds 67,000 households.

Advance to Zero offers a serious alternative. It is not rhetoric; it is a carefully calibrated program to help. Communities come together around a formal action plan that aligns councils, housing providers, health services and outreach teams. They set clear targets, assign responsibility and measure progress relentlessly. They maintain a live by-name list of every person sleeping rough – a real-time, person-specific record that tracks inflow, outflow and housing placements so that no-one is invisible and no-one falls through the cracks. Grounded in Housing First principles, it drives month-by-month reductions in rough sleeping, working toward what is known as functional zero, where homelessness is rare, brief and not repeated. If Victoria is serious about addressing rising rough sleeping and the growing housing register, then we must scale what works. Ending homelessness is achievable. What is required now is nothing more than the political will.

Aiden Pugh

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (15:21): I rise today to acknowledge the remarkable courage of a young man in my electorate, Aiden Pugh. On Christmas Day, while most families were gathered around lunch tables, exchanging gifts and enjoying the day, Aiden found himself in the middle of a frightening and dangerous situation when weather conditions turned and he and his stepmother found themselves swept out to sea. To spend more than 3 hours at sea on Christmas Day battling strong currents after being carried deep into the bay and to do so while repeatedly assisting his stepmum back on her inflatable after she had fallen off multiple times is nothing short of extraordinary. Aiden's ability to remain calm, take control of the situation and keep his stepmum safe demonstrates remarkable strength, maturity and leadership for someone so young. Heroism is not always loud. Sometimes it is deeply personal. Sometimes it is a son refusing to give in when someone he loves is in danger. Aiden Pugh showed extraordinary courage, and I am proud to place on record this house's recognition of his selfless act.

Bert and Norma Jarvis

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (15:22): I would also like to take a moment to give my heartfelt congratulations to Bert and Norma Jarvis on their 70 years of marriage. What a wonderful couple, so connected and in love and part of our community.

Polwarth electorate bushfires and floods

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (15:22): I rise today to acknowledge the wonderful community spirit that I experienced last week as my community, the Polwarth community, are beginning to recover from recent bushfires and floods. A special shout-out to the young students at the Beeac Primary School and the St Mary's, Colac, primary school, who, together with one of the dads, Peter Reid, and local CFA officials, came together in celebration of all the hard work that our CFA volunteers have done over all of this summer. It was a wonderful tribute with art and a few speeches, and even the head of the CFA came down to support this community initiative.

That came on top of a wonderful visit to the Gellibrand hall, which the Gellibrand neighbourhood house occupies. The Gellibrand neighbourhood house has done a wonderful job over recent weeks, providing a venue for the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and food, clothing and other support that the community needs at this time.

It is also worth noting that in coming days we will see the wonderful support of BlazeAid and the volunteers that will be coming to the community to help the many farmers replace literally hundreds and hundreds of kilometres of fencing, which will need to be done before winter sets in and the hills of Carlisle River and Gellibrand become too wet and boggy to replace fencing. It is very important work to do indeed, so I give a big shout-out to those various groups, who have been working well together, and to the kids and the community of Colac, who are celebrating that hard work.

Broadmeadows electorate multicultural and multifaith communities

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (15:24): Happy Year of the Horse. There are many Buddhist families in my electorate who celebrate this special day, including Bhutanese, Tibetan, Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian, Thai, Malaysian, Korean and Singaporean, as well as many Nepalese Tamangs, Magars, Gurungs and Sherpas. This is what I love about the Australian Nepalese Multicultural Centre, which celebrates both the Buddhist and Hindu faiths and which hosted a huge Maha Shivratri celebration on Sunday.

On Saturday I enjoyed the past players celebration at Glenroy Cricket Club and visited Masjid Ar-Rahman and Millî Görüş on Victorian Open Mosque Day on Sunday. I had the joy of witnessing our young people's achievement celebrated at the magnificent Our Lady Guardian of Plants church in Campbellfield and then unveiled the Peace Pole in Fawkner, led by Pascoe Vale Rotary and the indomitable Deborah D'Aprano, in partnership with the Merri-bek interfaith forum. I thank the chair Syed Waqar Hussein and all the members for the really important work they do.

The world's faiths are built on mercy, compassion, respect and looking after one another, particularly the poor and vulnerable. We all share the golden rule of being kind to each other and a strong belief in the dignity of each human. There is more that unites us than sets us apart, and we never want to see anyone live in fear because they wear a hijab, a cross, a star, a tikka, a turban or a xâu chuỗi. Lent begins tomorrow and Ramadan starts later this week, and I am looking forward to celebrating many iftars. Breaking bread together is the best way to promote understanding between people, and there is nothing more important than this right now.

West Tarneit train station

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (15:25): West Tarneit station is not far away now. Thank you to all local residents for your patience, particularly over holiday periods, when there are a number of disruptions. That patience will soon be rewarded with our brand new station. Just last week I visited the construction site and saw the incredible progress being made. The underpass has now been dug and the platforms are really starting to come together. It is exciting to see this project taking shape. In speaking with residents, particularly those living north of the station and the rail line, there has been a strong interest in making sure the new station is well connected to the surrounding community. Here is some good news for those residents: alongside the new station we will be introducing a brand new bus route. Route 186 will be a fixed service, providing Tarneit North residents with an additional travel option and reducing the reliance on FlexiRide. The existing route 182 will also be realigned and service levels increased to better connect with the West Tarneit station. We know how important public transport is, especially in a suburb growing as quickly as Tarneit. Thank you again to the construction team for showing me around the site. I am looking forward to seeing West Tarneit station open later this year. I am proud to be a member of a government that supports our growing communities, unlike those opposite, who left Tarneit North without bus routes, without schools and without any transport infrastructure whatsoever.

Lunar New Year

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (15:27): I rise to acknowledge Lunar New Year celebrations across Mulgrave, one of the most proudly multicultural electorates in Victoria. Mulgrave is home to vibrant Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian and broader South-East Asian communities. For many families the Lunar New Year is the most significant celebration of the year, a time of reunion, renewal and hope. The Year of the Horse symbolises strength, endurance and forward momentum, qualities that reflect the migrant stories and hardworking spirit of Mulgrave. I have been honoured to attend many celebrations across our community. I sincerely thank the Cambodian Chinese Friendship Association of Victoria, the Springvale Asian Business Association, the Hakka Association and the National Council of Australian Federal Chinese Associations from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, along with many dedicated groups. In particular, the Springvale Lunar New Year Festival, hosted by SABA on the weekend, is one of the largest and longest running cultural festivals in our region, proudly bringing families and local businesses together for more than three decades. As the state member for Mulgrave, I am proud to stand alongside these communities and our multicultural communities. To all families celebrating: may the Year of the Horse bring health, prosperity and success. Xīn nián kuài lè. Chúc mừng năm mới.

Monbulk electorate sports facilities

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (15:28): I am looking forward to officially opening the upgraded and modernised Wally Tew recreation reserve pavilion in Ferntree Gully this weekend, made possible through Allan government and Knox council investment. This upgrade has delivered a new kiosk, upgraded umpire's room, kitchen, social room and female-friendly change room amenities. The new verandah provides a spectacular spectator view of the oval from the first floor and protection from the elements on the ground. New accessible toilets also make it easier and safer for more people to use the facility. In great news for sustainability, the pavilion has also transitioned from gas to all-electric systems, boosting energy efficiency and reducing long-term operating costs. The member for Bayswater and I are pretty stoked about this upgrade and thrilled our government has made it possible.

At the other end of the electorate, it was great to officially open the new and improved lights at Cockatoo's Mountain Road Recreation Reserve last week. Delivered through investment from our Allan government's country football and netball program and Cardinia Shire Council, these upgraded LED lights mean training can now happen for more teams at more times and allow for more opportunities for junior development, particularly the growing number of girls joining local footy.

Upwey High School

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (15:29): Last week I met with Upwey High School's year 10 students Jack, Abby, Marli, Olivia and Eleanor, teacher Ms Liz Lynch and principal Rachel Lynch to learn about their bushfire education program, which they have been part of since year 7, developing real-world bushfire awareness and preparedness. These inspiring young people have been covered by the ABC and local press, showcasing how they are developing practical, life-saving knowledge and skills and spreading the word to their peers, families and friends. Congratulations.

Crime prevention

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (15:30): The violence reduction unit is doing nation-leading work in how we divert young people away from crime, because violence is preventable, not inevitable. We have seen the success of violence reduction units in the UK, particularly in Glasgow and in London. We have seen those programs reduce violent crime over time. There is nothing more fundamental than kids having access to an education and keeping them connected to people in their communities through education, sport or health outcomes, and we know a public-led health response is the key response that has been successful in driving down crime over time. There is no excuse for serious crime in our community. There are consequences, and adult time for violent crime is at the heart of this work. But we as the Labor government want to see young people succeed in our

community and be diverted away from that, and that prevention work is so very critical. With the work of the violence reduction unit in the UK we have seen some 300,000 different activities which have made a tangible reduction in youth crime. We have seen double-digit percentage drops in crime in Glasgow. This is the kind of work that will be coming to Melbourne and Victoria. As Parliamentary Secretary for Violence Reduction, this is the key to how we reduce crime into the future.

Bills

Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Danny Pearson:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (15:31): I rise to speak on the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. Can I thank the Treasurer's office from the outset for their cooperation through the bill briefing, as always, and for following up, when we had a series of questions, with the detailed information that they provided. This is a very detailed bill that takes in entities and different agencies from right across government and many different portfolios, and I thank my shadow ministers for their input into the bill before us today.

This bill amends several pieces of legislation to implement part of the government's response to the *Independent Review of the Victorian Public Service*, more commonly referred to as the Silver review. This piece of legislation was introduced into the Parliament before the Silver review was handed down, but the government has confirmed that this is just the first tranche of implementing the Silver review. According to the government, this bill does this by abolishing, reforming and consolidating a number of public entities and boards. It also implements a range of other related and unrelated reforms. I think it is important to remind ourselves why we are here today considering this bill, a bill that seeks to abolish, a bill that seeks to merge, a bill that seeks to consolidate a number of public entities and boards, essentially to reduce full-time staff numbers in the public service and reduce costs. The reason why the government is seeking to make these changes is because the government has mismanaged the finances in this state for more than a decade. This government has so mismanaged the books for more than a decade now that they have had to initiate the Silver review to find opportunities to reduce the public service, to cut agencies, because of their own financial mismanagement.

Victoria's net debt is increasing by $1.7 million every single hour. Every single hour Victoria's net debt grows by $1.7 million because of the financial mismanagement of the Labor government. Of course it is projected to reach a record $192.6 billion by 2029. And what does that mean? It means that Victorians will be paying more than $1 million every single hour just on the interest bill to service that debt – more than $1 million every single hour just to pay the interest on Labor's record debt. That means every single hour this government could employ 10 police officers, 11 paramedics or nine teachers with the interest bill under this government's record debt. This is money that should be going to frontline services. This is money that should be ensuring that we are keeping our police stations open, not seeing more than 40 of them with reduced hours or closing. This is money that should be ensuring that it does not take longer today than it did a decade ago to get an ambulance in this state. This is money that should be ensuring we have the best funded public schools in the country, not the worst funded under the Allan Labor government. For our police officers, our teachers and our paramedics to deliver the essential services that Victorians rely on, they need to be properly funded. They need funding to increase year on year. There are fewer police on the beat today than when the Premier became the Premier, yet crime has increased 29 per cent over the same period. How does that equation work? Fewer police under this Premier, crime has increased: these are the consequences of a decade of financial mismanagement under this Labor government.

And now we know, on top of the blowouts on the Big Build of more than $50 billion and on top of the waste that this government has become accustomed to every single day, with $600 million to

cancel the Commonwealth Games, $200 million of which is going to Glasgow to host the Commonwealth Games, $13 million on machete bins when knife crime continues to increase under the Labor government and $200,000 on pot plants, not even to buy the pot plants but just to rent them – this is a government that knows no bounds when it comes to wasting taxpayer money – that $15 billion on this government's watch, on this Premier's watch, has been going into the pockets of criminals, bikies, organised crime figures and underworld figures. $15 billion of Victorian taxpayer money has gone from Big Build sites into the pockets of criminals, and what makes it worse is the government knew about it. The government knew that this was happening on government-funded construction sites, and the government did nothing about it. This Premier knew that there was corruption on government-funded construction sites, and she turned a blind eye.

The Premier claims that she referred this to IBAC, knowing that IBAC did not have the powers to investigate. So either the Premier did not know what IBAC's powers were and is therefore incompetent, or she did know and knowingly made a referral that she knew would go nowhere. But it does not matter, because IBAC told the Premier that they dismissed the referral. What did this Premier do? Absolutely nothing, because this Premier is not interested in getting to the bottom of the rotten culture on these government sites. Why – because the Labor Party is benefiting from it. We have seen today revelations of, at the last election, donations from criminals, from those linked to organised crime, from those linked to underworld figures, going directly to the Labor Party.

Is it any wonder why this Premier continues to cover this up? This is the largest corruption scandal in the history of this state, and what does the Premier say: 'It's got nothing to do with me. It's not my responsibility. It's everyone else's fault.' Well, Premier, you are the leader of this state. This is your responsibility. This happened on your watch. You were the minister in charge of major projects, of the Big Build, for years. This happened on your watch, and you continue to cover it up. This government knows no bounds when it comes to covering up corruption. We have seen it time and time again – IBAC reports coming out identifying corruption at the very core of this Labor government. We had the former commissioner come out in the past few days to highlight that this Premier's –

John Lister: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I understand there is a little bit of lenience, but it has been quite some time since the bill was addressed in the Leader of the Opposition's contribution. I am looking forward to hearing their thoughts about the entities legislation amendment bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak): There is no point of order.

Jess WILSON: I understand why those opposite do not want to talk about the $15 billion worth of corruption that has happened on their watch – $15 billion into the pockets of criminals. What do you say to the Victorians who have been victims of crime while your government has let money go into the pockets of criminals and criminal syndicates? Yes, we are very quiet now. This government has overseen the largest corruption scandal in this state's history, and this Premier is refusing to do a thing about it.

The Premier today took the opportunity to praise the Fair Work Commission and say that this is an important independent body. But it was highlighted that the same independent body, the Fair Work Commission, in Senate estimates confirmed that Victorian government officials have said that $15 billion is a conservative estimate in terms of the money that has been funnelled into criminal syndicates in this state. The Fair Work Commission confirmed that – an eminent integrity expert – but of course when it does not suit the Premier, it is everyone else's fault.

Let me come back to the bill before us. The reason why we have this bill before us is because of this government's financial mismanagement for a decade and the $15 billion of taxpayer money that they have allowed to go into the pockets of organised crime – of bikie gangs. This is why the government had to commission the Silver review in the first place. This is why this government is failing Victorians on crime, where we have seen rising crime rates year after year. Finally we hear from this government that they realise there might be a little bit of a problem – that Victorians do not feel safe in their own

homes – but they have had to be dragged to that position. We have had to see crime increase year on year. We have had to see violent crime increase, with home invasions night after night. I know that we on this side of the chamber have received the CCTV footage of people breaking into homes with knives and with machetes night after night. And how did it happen? Because this government weakened the bail laws in this state. They are still weaker today than they were when this government changed them three years ago.

This is a government that has lost its way. This is a government that is not putting the priorities of Victorians first. It is okay to put the priorities of the CFMEU first – the Premier will go and defend them every day – but when it comes to ensuring that people are safe in their own homes, we will actually see the number of police fall while crime increases. It is the same when it comes to our healthcare system. Data last week shows the waiting list continues to grow under this government. 64,000 Victorians are waiting for elective surgery. Time and time again under this government we have seen the elective surgery waiting list grow. More recent data has shown that for those who are waiting for category 2 surgeries, which are meant to be treated within 90 days, over 40 per cent in Victoria are not being treated within 90 days. What is the comparison in New South Wales? About 4 per cent – unbelievable under this government. Dental surgery: in New South Wales it takes about a week to be seen for general dental care; in Victoria, more than five months.

Paul Mercurio: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I am listening carefully to the member's debate and I am looking through the bill, and I cannot see any relevance to what is in the bill from what the member is actually saying at the moment. I would love you to bring her back to the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak): It is a wideranging debate. There is no point of order.

Nick Staikos: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I appreciate that lead speakers have a certain level of latitude, but I think it is incumbent on lead speakers to at least once refer to the bill. It is right here. The bill is the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. I also appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition has rehearsed a speech that she wants to give, but perhaps now is not the opportunity for that. The Leader of the Opposition should be referring to the bill that is currently before the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak): There is no point of order, but I do ask the member to come back to the bill.

Jess WILSON: I will come back to the speech before me. As I said at the outset, the reason why the Silver review had to take place in the first place is because the Labor government has mismanaged the budget. The interest bill being more than $1 million every single hour in this state means that the government cannot fund these entities anymore. It means that the government is cutting the public service. That is what is in the bill before us today. This is a bill that cuts the public service. Why – because this government cannot manage money. And why can't this government manage money? Because they have stood by and seen $15 billion of taxpayer money funnelled into the pockets of criminals in this state.

In the bill before us today I want to flag a number of concerns from the opposition, particularly when it comes to the abolition of the Victorian Government Purchasing Board. The bill amends the Financial Management Act 1994 to abolish the VGPB and transfer all of its functions to the Minister for Government Services. The government has contended that other regulatory measures influencing procurement have been implemented, which means the board is no longer needed. Well, the board can no longer be paid for; that is the actual essential point to all of this. But it simply beggars belief that in the midst of the state's worst ever corruption crisis the government is coming into this Parliament with a bill that seeks to reduce oversight of government procurement.

We know that this government has no interest when it comes to securing value for taxpayer money – this government fails Victorians every single day – and we know that the Victorian government and

the Premier have ignored the red flags and that she is far more interested in putting on her hi-vis vest and putting on her hard hat than she is in safeguarding the public money that goes to fund these sites. But this is another example of where the government is seeking to reduce oversight of government spending and of government procurement processes. It is supposed be handed over in a situation where we are debating the removal of an oversight mechanism on government procurement. As I said, we know the Premier has turned a blind eye to rorts of government projects – $15 billion has gone into the pockets of criminals.

She has overseen systemic vulnerabilities that she has allowed to be exploited at scale. The coercion, the unlawful payments and the entrenched corruption tell us that the corruption is not incidental. It is not isolated; it is structural, and it has flourished under this Premier's watch. That is why we see before us in the bill today another example of this government seeking to remove IBAC's oversight of government procurement decisions and of infrastructure projects. It is remarkable that in the very week we have seen that $15 billion of taxpayer money from government infrastructure projects has gone to fund criminal syndicates in this state for drug peddling on these sites, we see the removal of an oversight body that goes to the very heart of procurement of infrastructure.

I also want to turn to a number of elements in this bill that seek to change the way we govern the mental health system. In doing so, I do want to acknowledge the work of the member for Lowan, who has been very active in working with the sector and ensuring that their views are heard by the coalition. The bill amends the Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 to restructure the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission by reducing the number of commissioners from four to one. It also alters the commissioner's role, expected qualifications and reporting arrangements. Now, I understand that while the Silver review contemplated reducing the number of commissioners, the Silver review did not specify a reduction to a single commissioner, which is exactly what this bill does. I understand that was a decision that was taken by the Labor government to reduce the number of commissioners to just one, not a recommendation by the Silver review. The bill also restructures the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing by reducing the number of board members and directors and amending their qualification requirements. Again, these changes do not align with any recommendations made in the Silver review. These are decisions that have been made by the Labor government outside the process established by the Silver review.

We have serious concerns about these proposals. They do not have the support of the mental health sector, and in fact they go against many recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. I am particularly concerned that this bill diminishes the importance of lived experience for important roles in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, and I know that the member for Lowan has done an extensive amount of work with the sector on this very issue. It also reverses the relationship between the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission and the government so that the government will now be sitting in judgement of the work of the commission. The member for Lowan has communicated to me the broad concerns of many mental health stakeholders. These measures undermine the narrow role of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission and wind back key recommendations that were made by the royal commission. These are changes put forward by the government that are outside the scope of the Silver review and work directly against the recommendations made by the mental health royal commission. The royal commission expressly recommended that commissioners have lived experience of mental illness and/or psychological distress. These measures do not align with any recommendations of the Silver review. Unfortunately the government, when we had our bill briefing, could not justify them or explain why they are necessary, and they certainly have not justified them or explained why they are necessary to the mental health sector.

There are a number of further changes contained in this bill that do not have their origins in the Silver review. I want to go to the amendments to the Local Government Act 1989 and the Essential Services Commission Act 2001, where the bill proposes to pare back the Essential Services Commission's advisory role in relation to local government rate caps. This change effectively removes the

requirement for the minister to seek ESC advice before setting rate caps and other associated monitoring, while retaining ESC responsibility for monitoring actual compliance. Like the abolition of the Victorian Government Purchasing Board, this is another move to remove scrutiny of government decisions by impartial umpires. At a time where this government continues to operate with unprecedented cost shifting to local governments, removal of scrutiny of rate cap decisions could easily undermine confidence in the rate-capping framework.

The bill also amends the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 and the Essential Services Commission Act to shift the responsibility for price regulation of the commercial passenger vehicle industry from the Essential Services Commission to the responsible minister. Finally, it amends the Accident Towing Services Act 2007 to remove the Essential Services Commission's role in conducting four-yearly reviews of accident towing service charges, replacing these with a ministerial-directed review and an amended CPI-based calculation. I will again flag the coalition's concern that this bill continues to remove oversight and scrutiny of decisions that will affect the price paid by Victorian households for various services and rates. Given their role as a specialist independent regulator, there is merit in requiring the minister to seek ESC advice before deciding if council rates or CPV charges should be increased. Once again I note these changes that relate to removing oversight and ensuring that ministerial discretion grows were not recommendations of the Silver review. These were not included in the Silver review. These are changes that have been put forward by the government outside the scope of the Silver review. I go back to where I began. At a time when this government has been exposed over recent days, and for years now, for covering up corruption in this state, a government that has overseen a $15 billion payday for criminals in this state, we should be seeing more oversight when it comes to ministerial decision-making, not less.

This bill contains more examples of this government's decision to avoid scrutiny at all costs. At a time when we have seen the largest corruption scandal in this state's history we should be looking to more scrutiny of decision-making. We should be ensuring that we are putting in place independent agencies that have the ability to ensure that they are providing independent advice. We know this government does not respect independent advice. We have independent integrity agencies today calling for greater powers from this government, saying they are not able to investigate the largest corruption scandal in this state's history, because the anti-corruption watchdog IBAC does not have the powers to do so. When IBAC makes the request to the Premier, to the government, to say, 'Give us the powers to get to the bottom of this corruption scandal,' what does the government say? 'No, we are not going to give IBAC those powers.' This government knows no bounds when it comes to turning a blind eye to corruption. The bill before us today just continues to highlight that after a decade of financial mismanagement in this state, after a decade of turning a blind eye to corruption, this government is now seeing cuts to government services. They are reducing the number of public service jobs in this bill. This government is cutting the public service because it has mismanaged the books for a decade.

The coalition will seek to move a number of textual amendments to this bill in the upper house to the points I made today around the mental health concerns that we have, the lack of oversight and scrutiny and the removal of those bodies. $15 billion has been ripped out of the pockets of hardworking Victorians – a $5000 per household corruption tax in this state, $5000 for every Victorian household, ripped out of their pockets and given to criminals, to bikies, to organised crime figures. This is the legacy of Premier Jacinta Allan. She was the minister responsible for the Big Build, she is now the Premier of this state and she knew it was happening. She knew it was happening on government-funded Big Build sites and did nothing – nothing.

And now that this information has seen the light of day, what does the Premier do? She continues to do nothing. It is like she could not care less, because it is not her money, it is Victorians' money. Five thousand dollars for every Victorian household has gone to fund criminal syndicates in this state. This government should be ashamed that Victorians have poorer services for it, that crime continues to increase on their watch because we do not have enough police on the beat and we cannot keep our police stations open, that they have seen the waiting list grow for elective surgeries and that it takes

longer today to get an ambulance than it did a decade ago. Under this government we have a Premier that continues to refuse to take responsibility. What I say to Victorians is: while this Premier continues to cover it up, I promise to clean it up.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (16:01): I rise in support of the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025, but I do so with a sense of disappointment, because I think this was the first opportunity for the Leader of the Opposition as Shadow Treasurer to really set forth what her alternative fiscal strategy might look like. I listened for 30 minutes, and I do not think we heard that articulated. I am still not entirely sure what the Liberal Party's position on this bill is.

Members interjecting.

Iwan WALTERS: I am deeply gratified that the members opposite are much more animated by my contribution than their own leader's, but I would also make the point that in her contribution the Leader of the Opposition actually took no firm position on this bill other than to say that textual amendments will be moved in the upper house. I do not know what those are, so I cannot comment upon them. But I will note that there was no position really taken on this government's good governance and efforts to reduce overlapping spending on entities which are not focused on frontline service delivery. The Liberals talk a good game outside of this chamber about the need to be fiscally prudent, and yet nothing in that speech actually went to the point of this legislation or gave an indication as to whether the parties opposite will join us in that endeavour.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, while the member is reflecting on not sticking to the debate and the bill before us, I ask the member to come back to the bill. It is just an odd debate to talk about fiscal strategy in entities legislation which does not actually talk about fiscal strategy.

Michaela Settle: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, there is no point of order. We heard from the Leader of the Opposition an extraordinarily wideranging contribution going everywhere but the bill. For the member for Lowan now to object is pretty extraordinary.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): There is no point of order. The range of debate has been set through the opening speech.

Iwan WALTERS: What that speech rested upon was a lot of ad hominem attacks on the Premier and the invocation of an unsubstantiated number in a part of a report that could not be stood up. I heard a lot about that number. What I did not hear anything about was the $11 billion in unfunded cuts that have been proposed by the Liberal Party and the National Party. These are real cuts that have been articulated but without any sense of where they are going to be funded and how they are going to hurt communities – communities like mine.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, this debate does not go to attacking the Liberal Party for their policy positions. I ask you to bring the member back to the legislation before us.

Michaela Settle: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I would again point out that the Leader of the Opposition chose to use her entire speech to discuss things that did not relate to the bill, so there is no point of order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): The opening contribution went to financial management and compared and contrasted financial management, so the member is being relevant to the debate and may continue.

Iwan WALTERS: I am concerned about the risks to my community of a scattergun, unthinking, unfeeling chainsaw approach to fiscal management, the Javier Milei school of government, and I am interested to see who on that side will be wielding the chainsaw come the campaign. Who will be in charge of DOGE? Who will be the Elon Musk on that side, because there is Liberal–National confusion at every turn on fiscal bills, and I contend that this is indeed a fiscal bill, because it gets to the point of spending of public money in this state.

In the same breath they propose more spending. They criticise the government for not spending more on particular projects – disproportionately in their electorates, I might add – while also critiquing every single taxation measure and every single revenue measure. The numbers do not add up, and to paraphrase *The Thick of It*, this kind of free-range, no-consequence nonsense might be hugely entertaining when you are in opposition –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I understand there is some latitude, but we are now over 4 minutes into a 10-minute contribution, and all that he has done is attack the Liberal Party. I ask you to bring him back to the entities legislation, which he has not mentioned once during his contribution.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): There is no point of order.

Iwan WALTERS: When you are in opposition it might be entertaining, but when you are in government – or you aspire to be – you actually have to make decisions and trade-offs and be clear with voters –

Emma Kealy: Speaker –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Member for Lowan, it has been the same point of order and I have ruled repeatedly on it, so I am saying that my original ruling stands, unless you have a different point of order.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, I would like this decision reviewed by the Speaker – and this passage – because it is completely out of line with the requirements of the standing orders of the house, and it is outrageous that such political commentary is allowed to continue when the name of the bill has not even been mentioned within the contribution of the member on his feet. We have an obligation when we are debating legislation to stick to this, and this is a precedent of the house. It is a precedent of previous Speakers. I ask you to consider your ruling.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Thank you, member. I am sure the Speaker is available if you wish to see her at any time.

Iwan WALTERS: Those opposite can obfuscate and they can invoke points of order, but at some point this year they are actually going to have to be clear with voters about the realities and implications of their spending plans. Where are those $11 billion in cuts going to come from? Are they going to result in thousands fewer doctors and allied health staff or the fewer elective surgeries that the Leader of the Opposition talked about? Forget fewer schools opened – we will be back to the Kennett days of closures and forced amalgamations. Maybe the Upfield line will not run on Sundays; it will be converted to light rail. Either way, it will not be people in Kew carrying the can for cuts. It will be Kalkallo, Craigieburn, Coolaroo and Campbellfield. It will be Roxburgh Park, Meadow Heights and Westmeadows picking up the pieces of their indiscriminate slash and burn, which has not been properly articulated.

The Leader of the Opposition in her contribution on the entities bill also made what I think is quite a remarkable suggestion: that the Silver review is a manifestation of poor government. That is an insight into what a future Liberal government – perish the thought – might actually result in. The Silver review is about ensuring that public money is spent as efficiently and effectively as it can be. Many theoreticians and academics about public administration, like Christopher Hood, have talked about the inexorable capacity of government to expand. It is a bit like the exercise of painting the Sydney Harbour Bridge – a responsible government needs to ensure that there are no overlapping entities and that money is not being duplicated in its expenditure, and that is what this bill does. Bringing back a lot of those functions from unelected quangos into government agencies with ministerial oversight I contend increases the accountability. It increases the democratic oversight of spending. Entities like the Victorian Government Purchasing Board, a relic from the Kennett era, would be abolished by this bill. But the spending decisions do not disappear off into a vacuum; they become the responsibility of

a minister who is accountable and responsible to this place and to the people of Victoria. That is democratic oversight and accountability.

The bill in its entirety implements a series of amendments to reduce duplication across government while also clarifying roles and responsibilities within the public sector. It is a manifestation of good government, ensuring that money can be spent on service delivery, not on administrative tasks which can be discharged more efficiently by other entities or within government departments themselves.

I want to reflect briefly on the importance of ensuring that we have that sense of democratic oversight of public expenditure. There is a lot of academic literature about that quango issue that I talked about previously, the quasiautonomous non-government organisations, which are taxpayer-funded bodies, like those reflected in the bill, which are effectively bodies doing work outsourced from government departments. This bill brings that back inside government departments where appropriate, but it also removes the duplication that can exist unnecessarily. That is what I am concerned about. I want to ensure that the money that is raised by the taxpayers of this state is spent on service delivery.

I also want to draw the house's attention to a couple of other claims in the Leader of the Opposition's initial contribution – around police numbers, for example, noting that we have more police in this jurisdiction than in any other. I think it is important that we are clear about that point, because to do otherwise would be to mislead the people of Victoria.

The Silver review did find that there were some entities and boards whose functions are no longer needed and whose functions overlap with the existing work of core departments. There is, as I said, a need for periodic review to ensure that public money is being spent as efficiently as possible and that it is having the policy effects that this Parliament desired when it voted for the appropriations bills that fund those services. It is a form of good government to ensure that we are regularly reviewing where money is being spent and to avoid duplication. I heard in the Leader of the Opposition's speech a suggestion that in doing so that is somehow a reflection of poor fiscal management. So it leads me to presume that the counterfactual would be that – again, perish the thought that those opposite ever find themselves in the Treasury benches – they would never review government spending. They would allow government to grow and grow in perpetuity without any heed to the duplication that might exist across different functions of government. I think this is a worthwhile bill that streamlines government and makes sure that money is being spent where it is needed most: service delivery.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (16:11): I would like to respond to the member for Greenvale, who questioned what we would cut. I can tell you what we would cut. We would not have strippers on Big Build sites. I reckon that we could clearly cut a few bucks out of doing that. I reckon that when you need to bring in strippers to motivate male construction workers just to turn up for their job, that would be a bloody good place to start, and it is a disgrace that you will not stand up for that and call it out. We have got $15 billion of wasted money, corrupted money, that Labor are not taking any stand at all to cut out.

Michaela Settle: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, on the use of unparliamentary language, in that statement there was a curse that was pretty offensive.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): I anticipate that this will be a heated contribution, and I ask people to be mindful of their language and keep things in a somewhat good manner.

Emma KEALY: I return to the legislation, but it is a pleasure to be able to respond to that, because we do not hide behind cutting out production. In fact we want to implement a royal commission to get to the bottom of it, to follow the money and to get those criminal bikie gangs, to get the CFMEU and to get other unions who donate to Labor to pay that money back. We must see those taxpayer dollars that have been corrupted and rorted paid back to the government as a matter of priority.

Michaela Settle: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I do not believe that we have heard mention of the bill as yet from the speaker on her feet, despite her previous objections.

Tim Bull: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, you determined in the previous contribution this was a wideranging debate, and the member just mentioned that she was referring to the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Yes, it is incredibly wideranging.

Emma KEALY: Back in 2021, about five years ago, we saw the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System hand down its final report.

Michaela Settle interjected.

Emma KEALY: It was about five years ago, and I take up the member for Eureka, who is falsely claiming that we were against it. We were in joint –

Members interjecting.

Emma KEALY: I know exactly how I voted. I voted in support of every recommendation, and I ask the member not to interject if that would be all right. But we actually have supported them every step of the way. What is revealed in this legislation that is before us today is that the government is walking back key recommendations to make sure there is effective oversight on the implementation of the royal commission's recommendations. This legislation specifically undoes recommendation 44, which was to establish the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. I will quote what the royal commission said:

> **The Royal Commission recommends that the Victorian Government:**
>
> establish an independent statutory authority, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, to:
>
> hold government to account for the performance and quality and safety of the mental health and wellbeing system;
>
> support people living with mental illness or psychological distress, families, carers and supporters to lead and partner in the improvement of the system;
>
> monitor the Victorian Government's progress in implementing the Royal Commission's recommendations; and
>
> address stigma related to mental health.

The legislation before us today directly undoes the work that was put into the introduction of the original act back in 2022 and is exactly opposite to what the royal commission recommended the powers of the commission should be. This is reflected in the introduction of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Bill 2022. It actually states:

> The Commission will be empowered to hold government to account for the performance, quality and safety of the mental health and wellbeing system; the implementation of recommendations made by the Royal Commission; and ensuring the mental health and wellbeing system supports and promotes the health and wellbeing of consumers, families, carers and supporters and the mental health and wellbeing workforce.

Yet, when we go through the amendments and the clauses that are in this legislation, it directly undoes the commission's responsibilities and powers in relation to oversight of the implementation of the royal commission's recommendations. In fact the clauses in effect flip the system so the commission now reports to the department rather than to the Parliament. We have a situation where the government are the ones who set out what should be the priorities of the commission, whose job was outlined to implement the royal commission's recommendations, and instead the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission are neutered on many fronts to limit the amount of information that they can access.

It is not about just limiting the amount of information they can access, though, it is also limiting the amount of information that they publish. That is quite clear within the clauses. If anybody who has a passion for mental health could look at that, I recommend that you do, because it is deeply concerning. Clause 116 specifically says the commission's monitoring and reporting function is limited. You look then to further in this clause and see that the commission's function to advise and report to the Parliament and ministers is limited. We see this over and over again. We look at clause 131; it is designed to limit the commission's obligation to include in its annual report a report on performance,

quality and safety. It takes out all reference to implementation of the royal commission's recommendations. We look further down this clause: it removes the power for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission to include any other information determined by the commission in its annual report, so the oversight body that is supposed to be monitoring government to ensure they are implementing the royal commission recommendations, which were to take place over 10 years, is now being cut five years into its reform.

This is why the mental health sector are so distressed and angry with the Allan Labor government. I remember being down at the Royal Exhibition Building when this report was tabled. There were people from across the mental health sector who were invited to be part of that. There were people with lived experience who had opened up – and some, with courage, for the very first time – to share their experiences of working within a mental health system that did not support them, that did not listen to them and where they did not feel heard. They were promised by the Labor government that they would be heard – that they would be front and centre of the reform of Victoria's mental health system. But all we ever saw from Labor was an implementation of a new tax. We have seen now a walk-back so that the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission is a toothless tiger. It cannot even get information out of the department as it currently stands, and yet its powers are being further diminished through this legislation today.

We also look at how the commission can possibly work with a reduced number of commissioners, when it was highlighted by the then Minister for Mental Health how important it was that we had four voices on the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, including the voice of people with lived and living experience. This was also said about the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing – a co-chair position where there would be somebody who had experience in the sector, somebody with lived and living experience. All of those intentions and promises that were given to people with lived and living experience have now been dismissed by the government, which no longer prioritises mental health in this state. That is absolutely disgraceful, in my view, because you have let down Victorians who need support more than anything else. They need hope to know that when they need support they can access somebody. But instead in Victoria we see services diminish. We are seeing waitlists get longer for mental health and wellbeing support, particularly in rural and regional areas. We see the broken promises of Labor for mental health and wellbeing locals around the state.

For me they were mental health and wellbeing locals for Horsham, Hamilton and Ararat that were promised. We have not even got any money flowing through that yet. It is not designed. The interim regional boards that were established to provide a local voice to provide mental health support and guide government have been disbanded. We look at so many aspects where we were overpromised and government has underdelivered, and we now have a catastrophic outcome in that Victoria's suicide rate is higher than ever. It is a shameful day in this Parliament that we have a government that would seek to diminish the oversight and the implementation of the royal commission's recommendations and actually remove reference to it in the governing legislation.

I am so sad for people within the mental health system, those who are now coming forward, because they have always been of the left, and they cannot see a pathway forward under this government. I urge the government to reconsider these sweeping cuts to the powers of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. We need to have a commission that reports to Parliament and that provides oversight over how we reform Victoria's mental health system, but diminishing and taking away their powers and ensuring that they report to the department rather than have oversight of the government is an appalling disregard for what the royal commission found during their deliberations over what they heard from people who have worked in and experienced the sector. I urge the government to reconsider these drastic cuts, because you are not going to deliver the mental health and wellbeing system that Victoria needs and deserves if you go through with these drastic cuts to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (16:21): It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to rise and make a contribution on this piece of legislation and indeed in favour of this piece of legislation. It has been a

lively debate so far. I had the opportunity from my office in the annexe to listen to the Leader of the Opposition's contribution at the beginning of this debate, the Leader of the Opposition that also insists that she is the Shadow Treasurer; I mean, it does not say much for the trust that she has in her teammates, does it? Given the given the absolute group of deadbeats that they are, I understand why she would keep the shadow treasury. I thought you might call a point of order at me for calling you deadbeats. But anyway, it is no surprise that she does not have any trust in her teammates.

It was a contribution – I will not say it was a pleasure to listen to it, because quite frankly, it was half an hour of utter dross. Not once did the Leader of the Opposition, who is debating a bill in her own portfolio, get anywhere near the substance of this piece of piece of legislation. Either she has not bothered to read it or be briefed on it, or she did not understand it. What is that line from *Billy Madison*? Everybody in the room is now dumber for having listened to it. It did not go anywhere near this piece of legislation. It was just a contribution that you may be able to get a couple of Instagram clips out of or send out on YouTube as a bit of an ad.

This piece of legislation is a responsible savings package that we can take to the budget to make sure that our spending as a state, as a proportion of gross state product, is in a good, proportionate place, as it should be, and that our budget stays healthy and that we remain in budget surplus, as the Treasurer delivered in May last year. But it is a responsible savings package that also makes sure that we keep frontline services and frontline workers funded exactly how they should be funded, because that is what Labor governments have always done. Labor governments build hospitals and hire nurses; they do not shut hospitals and sack nurses. Labor governments build schools – indeed 100 brand new schools. The member for Melton as part of his member statement earlier spoke about – was it the seventh school in five years?

Steve McGhie interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: Five in seven years. I think I have got more in Tarneit; I think I have had about six in the last four or five years. Labor governments build schools and hire teachers and make sure that they are paid well and looked after and have good working conditions and good working hours – unlike the Liberal Party, who, every single time they get into government, close or amalgamate schools and sack frontline workers. This is a responsible savings package that does not go to any of that. It makes sure that those frontline services that Victorians rely on every single day are still fully funded so that we are providing Victorians exactly what they need and that those frontline workers that deliver those services are still employed, are still paid well and still have good working conditions. That is what this package does.

Whether it be the Leader of the Opposition or Shadow Treasurer or whatever hat she is wearing on any particular day, or the member for Lowan – regardless of who is making the contribution – I have not heard anybody explain to the house or explain to the Victorian people the cuts that they will make to fill the $11 billion budget black hole.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I think the member on his feet has varied somewhat from the bill, and I ask you to bring him back to it.

Michaela Settle: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, as you have ruled, this has been a wideranging debate, and I think the member is within that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): The debate so far has been wideranging, based on the opening contribution. However, members may like to start slowly –

Cindy McLeish: That doesn't set the tone for the entire one; that just sets hers.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Thank you for your assistance, member for Eildon. Members may like to start moving back towards the debate, although it has been wideranging.

Dylan WIGHT: I feel like I am pretty close to the bill. I am certainly closer than the Leader of the Opposition, who told us what she had for dinner last night and went for half an hour on absolutely everything but the bill. But I will not digress too far.

As I said, this is a responsible savings package because this is a government that knows and wants to make sure that it is spending taxpayers money efficiently, effectively and responsibly. Obviously getting some of those public service employee numbers back towards pre-COVID levels is incredibly important. Obviously the public service increased during those years, and it is important through this responsible savings package to get back towards those pre-COVID levels. I spoke about making sure, obviously as a government – and all governments – making sure that spending is under control. You cannot just spend and spend and spend and spend and spend. Spending as a proportion of GSP has to be in a reasonable and proportionate place. What is helping that? Obviously this savings package will help that, but what is also helping that is that Victoria is the fastest growing economy anywhere in Australia.

Anybody that watches the news or reads the paper knows that Australia as a whole has a bit of an economic growth problem at the moment. Depending on who you would like to listen to, that could be because of productivity or it could be for some other outside reasons not pertaining to governments in Australia. But there is an economic growth problem in Australia – everywhere but Victoria. There are several things that we can bring that back to, but making sure that our spending is proportionate to our GSP is incredibly important, and having both this savings package and the incredibly strong economic growth and economy here in Victoria – with people in jobs and with projects happening, with all of that going on – is exactly how we do that.

As I said, our focus here in Victoria will remain on those core services that Victorians need, and they may be in health care. Out in my area in Tarneit the community is serviced by the Werribee Mercy Hospital. At the Werribee Mercy Hospital this government has invested over $100 million to completely rebuild the emergency department so it can take twice as many patients per year, and that will be open very shortly.

Obviously there is education as well – we are the Education State, we know that. Like I said, we build schools, we do not shut them. We hire teachers, we do not sack them. As I said, in my electorate we have several brand new schools, but we have also upgraded schools in Hoppers Crossing, which is a more established area in my electorate – Hoppers Crossing Secondary, The Grange and Mossfiel Primary School – because we know that infrastructure matters when it comes to education and that kids need to be able to go to world-class educational facilities to learn every day, because the environment that kids learn in matters. We know that as a government; they do not. Between 2010 and 2014 Tarneit was exploding as a population – not one new school and not one school upgrade under those opposite. Now they like to trot themselves out to the west and pretend that they care. They have never cared, and they never will.

Of course cost-of-living support is incredibly important to this government, whether that be free public transport for kids under the age of 18 or seniors on the weekends or whether that be school breakfast clubs. In so many schools in my electorate every single student eats breakfast at school because for so many of them, if they did not get breakfast at school, they would not have breakfast and they would go hungry. This is a government that is focused on what matters to Victorians – education, health care and cost-of-living support – whilst those opposite are just sitting in shadow cabinet dreaming up what they can cut if they ever get the gift of government ever again.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (16:32): I would also like to make a contribution on the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. As others have canvassed, the bill sets out to demolish, gut or merge public entities which play crucial roles particularly in protecting our natural environment and overseeing our mental health system, and they are the two elements that I am going to focus on in my speech today. We have heard government members talking about this bill reducing duplication across government, clarifying roles and responsibilities in the public sector

or streamlining reporting requirements, but really, instead of achieving these aims, the bill will actually make the government and polluters less accountable. I want to talk a little bit about that and some of the concerns that we have with it.

The bill abolishes several independent expert environmental bodies, and this will weaken Victoria's environmental framework and policy, it will weaken our knowledge base and it will weaken environmental protection in our state. It means that decisions about how to protect public land will often now be left entirely to political whims and political decision-making rather than independent bodies, and I think that is something that we should all be concerned about, particularly those who do care about protecting our natural environment. In the mental health space it will silence the voices of people with lived experience in shaping our mental health system. I understand that Labor wants to claw back a few million dollars, particularly ahead of an election, but the long-term implications of cutting these essential and independent agencies will have far-reaching implications for Victoria for generations to come, and I think that they are short-sighted.

I will start by talking about the bill's attacks on the environmental bodies, because the state of Victoria's environment is dire at the moment. We are in an extinction crisis. Up to one-third of our plants, birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals are threatened with extinction. The last Victorian nature report card, the state of the environment report, shows things are actually just getting worse. Over 80 per cent of our biodiversity indicators, in that report, were assessed as poor or unknown. That is a pretty horrific number: 80 per cent of our biodiversity indicators are either poor or unknown. That should be a warning sign to the government, not a sign to gut or disband our environmental agencies.

The bill will merge or abolish the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, the Victorian Marine and Coastal Council, Recycling Victoria and the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority. Unfortunately, we have seen lots of attacks on nature over the last little while by this government. Since 2023 the Labor government has sacked hundreds of core staff members across the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, across Parks Victoria and across the Victorian Fisheries Authority. It also meant cutting more than 100 forest and bushfire staff across the state in 2024. We have also seen Labor ignore or reject key environmental inquiries – for example, Labor's own duck-hunting inquiry or the independent review into the Wildlife Act 1975, which was shelved and never released – and they still have not responded to the parliamentary inquiry into biodiversity decline, despite it being several years overdue. Now as part of the Silver review it seems Labor wants to cut another 350 jobs from DEECA, targeting Agriculture Victoria, Solar Victoria, the First Peoples Group and bushfire and forest services. And then this bill will abolish four core nature bodies. I do not think this is just about cutting fat; I think we are actually now cutting into the bone of our environmental protection agencies.

The government also plans to get rid of rid of Sustainability Victoria. Unfortunately, that will not require new legislation; they can do that on their own. But that is a 20-year-old body that delivers really practical programs to help schools, businesses and households reduce energy use and waste. I am sure many of the members in this place have benefited. Their schools have benefited from the ResourceSmart Schools program and other programs that Sustainability Victoria runs. We also know that the government is considering abolishing the Scientific Advisory Committee, the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee, the National Parks Advisory Council and the Reference Areas Advisory Committee.

I think this is something that all fair-minded Victorians who care about protecting our environment should be very concerned about. It is not just the Greens who are saying that today; four major nature advocates went out and condemned this bill as well as Labor's future plans. The Victorian National Parks Association, the Wilderness Society, Environmental Justice Australia and the Victorian Protected Areas Council have all come out calling on the government to scrap this legislation and to retain these vital environmental bodies that have protected nature in Victoria for decades.

Let us talk about the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, or VEAC. The bill would abolish VEAC and transfer its functions to the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria.

VEAC has been around for 50 years. It has been an expert voice on creating new national parks and protected areas. It is where the government refers plans to an expert body that can actually do the work to come back and recommend which areas should be protected and do that detailed work. It was instrumental in the creation of Gariwerd national park in the Grampians, Alpine National Park, the box–ironbark national parks, red gum parks, marine national parks and of course the new central west parks that were recently put into legislation. Now Labor plans to abolish this independent council of experts and replace them with a single government staff member. And no shade on the commissioner; I am sure she does a fantastic job in so many areas. I have met with her a number of times and I very much respect her work, but it should not be a replacement for this independent body of experts that has a real track record in doing really important work when it comes to recommending protected areas.

The bill also removes key provisions like the mandatory duty for departments to act in accordance with government-accepted recommendations and leaves hundreds of gazetted areas in a kind of legal limbo. It weakens our knowledge base, it weakens transparency and it reduces community input. Fundamentally, removing VEAC leaves vital decisions on the management of public land down to short-term political pressure rather than expert advice, and we have seen recently that Labor has fallen prey to these small groups of vested interests, who have had disproportionate influence over environmental policy. If you just look at their decision not to ban duck hunting, even though Labor's own inquiry said that we should ban it, and the abandonment of new national parks in some of the previously forested areas, these are small groups of vested interests having disproportionate impact over Labor policy. I think that that is poor government, and we do not want to see any more of it.

One of the other bodies that this bill seeks to get rid of is the Victorian Marine and Coastal Council. This was created under an act in 2018 to provide independent advice on marine and coastal issues to the Minister for Environment. Now, eight years later, Labor seems to think it has finished its job. The bill leaves Victoria with no dedicated voice to hold the government accountable on things like coastal erosion, algal blooms, gas decommissioning, oil spills and the climate impact on Victoria's coasts. The spokesperson for the Victorian Protected Areas Council Geoff Wescott came out and said:

> A new Marine and Coastal Strategy is due next year and the very body that has historically had carriage of this critical implementation report has just been removed. Its disappearance risks gutting the entire Marine and Coastal Act.
>
> The government appears to be scared of independent expert advice and community input. It has politicised the public service to the extent that they are probably afraid to give independent advice and yet single individuals in the public service have been tasked with highly political roles under the intended changes.

I think that that is pretty damning and pretty concerning. It has material impacts, getting rid of independent advice, and it carries real risks. We recently saw South Australia get hit by an absolutely devastating algal bloom, and if an algal bloom like this hits Victoria's oceans, which unfortunately, with the way climate change is going, is not a small risk, and there is no independent expert body to look into it, to provide advice, we might see the kinds of alleged cover-ups that we have seen in South Australia, where there has been really very little action or investigation of that algal bloom.

We are seeing these huge impacts on our coasts due to climate change – not just bushfires but flash flooding on the Great Ocean Road and coastal erosion in places like Inverloch. We have also seen Labor invite gas companies to drill in our marine and coastal environments off the Otways and off the Gippsland Basin. So we are seeing a lot of pressures on our coastal environment from mining, from climate change, from new developments, from illegal fishing, from erosion, and yet Labor wants to get rid of the independent voice that holds the government accountable on environmental issues.

The other body that the government wants to get rid of is the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority. It wants to transfer some of those functions to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, DEECA. The point of, as we understood it, setting up the MLRA in Morwell in 2020 was to have an independent, trusted local body working alongside the community in the rehabilitation of mines. As we understand it, they have done a great job in those 5½ years. But the job has only just started – has not finished yet – and Victoria has not even started shutting down the final three polluting

brown coal mines in the Latrobe Valley, much less begun rehabilitating those mine sites. It is going to be a huge job, and losing the MLRA's independence, their dedicated local staff members and those relationships that they hold could be devastating for the Latrobe Valley. You cannot simply take the trust built and then just replace it with DEECA here in Melbourne. Rehabilitating those mines will be a very long and difficult process. It will mean significant impacts on the local community and their environment. Just think about the phenomenal amount of water that is going to be needed to fill those mines as well.

While we are talking about environmental agencies and water, I actually want to make some comments about an issue that is coming up a lot in my electorate related to water use, which is data centres. It is something that we have not had a chance to canvass here in the house but is very much related to some of the issues that are coming up in this bill. Right now Victoria already has around 57 data centres. In November Jacinta Allan, the Premier, announced that she wanted Victoria to be Australia's 'data centre centre'. But there does not seem to be any kind of interrogation about whether it is a good idea for the government to approve dozens of power- and water-hungry data centres in the middle of our cities and across our regions and what the cost of this would be to our communities. Data centres require enormous quantities of water and energy – water and energy that they drain from our rivers and our grid here in Victoria. In other places governments often require these big overseas tech companies to build their own renewable energy alongside the data centre so it is not putting a huge burden on the existing power supply and to create their own infrastructure to use recycled water. But here in Victoria we are not asking the big tech companies and billionaires to do that. In fact at the moment these facilities are only able to use drinking water from our rivers, which are already under huge pressure and only going to be more so. Even New South Wales requires data centres to invest in their own water and energy infrastructure, but not here in Victoria. Why?

The Victorian Labor government is also letting huge data centres take up precious space in the middle of our biggest city. NEXTDC is currently planning Australia's largest data centre in Fishermans Bend, which is just a couple of kilometres away from the CBD. Why would we give prime inner-city land to data centres when we are in the middle of a housing crisis? Maybe AI chatbots and Mark Zuckerberg's weird virtual avatars can live in data centres, but real, actual humans cannot. They need real, actual homes. And rapid growth in data centres also risks slowing our transition to clean energy, because even though we have increased renewable energy supply here in Victoria, our coal consumption and use – the burning of coal – has not actually decreased as quickly as it should have. In part that is due to the incredible increase in energy demand that exists in Victoria, including through these big data centres. The predicted surge in data centres even forced the Albanese Labor government to revise and downgrade its already weak climate targets, which seems kind of unbelievable but is actually true. And the thing is, there are not even a lot of jobs in data centres. The Labor government here seems to be chasing this short-term sugar hit, trying to attract big overseas tech companies to come to Victoria. But once the ribbon is cut on these data centres there are hardly any jobs in them, so why are we letting them take our precious inner-city prime land? Why are we letting them use our drinking water and put incredible pressure on our energy system, for big overseas tech billionaires to make mega profits when Victorians seem to get very little benefit in return? I do not think we should be sacrificing our drinking water, our energy and our prime inner-city land just to supplement the profits of big tech billionaires.

These are the kinds of decisions that are being made here in Victoria, and we have very little independent oversight because we are gutting so many of our environmental agencies. Another agency that is being deleted from Victoria is Recycling Victoria. That is supposedly being rolled into the Environment Protection Authority. It seems the government has already forgotten that Recycling Victoria was established to overcome the purported inefficiency of the old system and to streamline the role of state government agencies and improve system-wide leadership and oversight of the waste and recycling sector. In 2021 Recycling Victoria replaced the previous seven WRRGs, the waste and resource recovery groups, which coordinated and facilitated the delivery of waste and recycling across their regions, and each of these groups had its own board, its own staff and its own approach to working

with local councils and businesses. According to the government back then this system created confusion amongst recycling businesses and councils and was ill equipped to respond to the global challenges facing the waste and recycling sector, and it required a streamlined approach and statewide policy goals. But by rolling Recycling Victoria into the EPA – and I assume we are asking the EPA to do more with fewer resources – the government risks enfeebling Recycling Victoria's core purpose: to oversee the waste, recycling and resource recovery sector and support the development of a circular economy, so we remain really concerned about getting rid of this group.

In my final few minutes I want to talk not just about the environment but about the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission is also under attack and being removed in this bill. Following the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System the commission was legislated into existence to hold the government accountable for the performance, safety and quality of the mental health system and the rights of people affected by mental illness. Alarmingly, the bill will reduce the number of its commissioners from four to one, and this comes in the wake of the government slashing the commission's funding in last May's budget. At the time the commission's chair, Commissioner Treasure Jennings, said that this reduced level of funding, alongside the plan to cut the number of mental health commissioners, would make it impossible for the organisation to do the work it was established to do less than two years ago. And to make matters worse, the bill also removes all requirements for lived-experience representation on the board of the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing. This board was set up in response to an interim recommendation of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, and it was set up to:

> … drive exemplary practice for the full and effective participation and inclusion of people with lived experience across the mental health system …

Just a few years on from that royal commission it is pretty disheartening to see that the government is already turning its back on those recommendations that it once said were incredibly important and that it wholeheartedly supported. Now it seems that they do not support them anymore, just two years later. We need a strong, independent, well-resourced public service to hold the government to account, to provide frank, fearless and independent advice, to listen to the experts and to ensure that our government meets the needs of our communities not just now but into the future, when we consider the environment.

There are really clear, practical ways to raise the revenue we need to fund a good life for everyone without capitulating to the short-term politics of quick-fix solutions like cutting these important agencies. There are solutions that are on the table. We have put many solutions on the table – a big bank tax, for example, maybe slicing off a little, tiny bit of the profits that some of our biggest banks make to fund the things that we all need. There are other ways that we could charge polluters more, for example, to pay for the damage that they cause to nature to fund some of these agencies. We do not think that the way that the government is cutting some really important agencies, which are independent and are filled with experts, in favour of rolling them into the department and into the public service is the right way to go about it.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (16:51): I want to pick up on a point about data centres. There is one in Port Melbourne called Equinix. I visited Equinix with the Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for Climate Action. They have actually deployed 1 megawatt of rooftop solar. They also have mechanisms for allowing airflow underneath. They pre-emptively took advantage of the Victorian energy upgrades program, so I hope that allays some concerns, because actually our government is very conscious of cutting emissions and costs. Equinix has taken advantage of the government's Victorian energy upgrades program. I just want to allay some of the concerns raised by the member for Melbourne, and I thank her for raising the issue for the chamber, because it is very good to be able to allay some of those concerns right here and now.

There were also matters raised about the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. Should the bill be approved in its current form, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission would move to a single-commissioner model. Moving to a single-commissioner model is about sharper accountability and clearer leadership. It reduces duplication and strengthens responsibility. I do want to go a little further to some of the specific concerns raised. It does not remove the commission's powers, independence or oversight functions. The commission will continue to report to Parliament, because it was alleged, I think by the member for Lowan, that this aspect would be taken away, so I am just allaying concerns. That is the point of debate, that we can actually discuss these matters. The commission will continue to report to Parliament, publish findings and hold government and services to account, as it rightly should. The commission will continue to have, as part of its legislated functions, a leading role in developing and elevating lived experience into leadership through the sector.

There were further, can I say, allegations that somehow we had walked away from our commitment to the recommendations of the royal commission. I must say that nothing could be further from the truth. When you look at our government's record, no other jurisdiction is doing as much to reform the mental health system as Victoria. We are not wasting a minute building a system that works for all Victorians, no matter where they live. We have already delivered significant reforms to grow our workforce, deliver new acute beds and new services, improve infrastructure and embed lived and living experience across our reform work.

I had the pleasure of seeing some of that in my electorate as well, in the Albert Road clinic. It has actually got another acronym, but anyway, it is in Albert Road. I visited there with the Minister for Mental Health. Certainly having those with lived experience, that peer-to-peer health focus, is very healing. You get that feedback directly from those who are receiving that care, so it is certainly very much being embedded into our mental health system.

If we are looking at the key achievements – because I do want to counter some of the concerns raised by those opposite – more than $600 million has been invested to support, retain and grow this important workforce, commissioning 2500 FTE since 2021. We have delivered more than 170 acute beds for adults, young people, women, older Victorians and Hospital in the Home beds. When it comes to capital, we have established a Mental Health Capital Renewal Fund, which received another $10 million in the 2025–26 budget. The commission said we need a dedicated hub in each region, and we have gone further. Five alcohol and other drug and mental health hubs are already operational around the state, with another eight in the pipeline. So I really thank the opposition for raising this issue, because we can actually speak to those matters delivered. It is actually very helpful of them.

More than $140 million has been delivered to put consumers and carers front and centre of reforms. We have delivered 22 locals across 24 locations, supported over 32,000 Victorians with free, easy-to-access mental health care and support close to home without needing a GP referral or Medicare card. We expanded multidisciplinary social and emotional wellbeing teams to Aboriginal community controlled organisations across Victoria and awarded 63 scholarships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertaking undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in mental health related disciplines. We have delivered three children's locals, we are delivering a youth prevention and recovery care centre in every region and we are undertaking foundational reforms, including age streaming and improving Headspace integration.

As you can see, contrary to some of the concerns raised by those opposite, we are absolutely and fundamentally committed to continuing to roll out mental health reform in this state, and it is already well underway. I do think it was a little bit rich the member for Lowan questioning our position on this when in fact those opposite did not want to pay for it. It was all very well to say, 'Yes, we support mental health, but we don't want to pay for it.' So, yes, I found that to be a little bit rich.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Albert Park needs to be factual. She is misleading the house at the moment.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): That is a matter for debate. She is responding to points of debate raised by a previous member.

Nina TAYLOR: Anyway, I was just speaking to support for the levy, which was backing in the mental health reforms. Those opposite were not keen to support that. I am just putting facts on the table. Anyway, that is the purpose of the debate.

When you look at where Victoria is at, there are more frontline services for Victorians than before the pandemic. Compared to 2019, there are 671 more police and protective services officers, an increase of 4.1 per cent, an extra 3890 teachers in our government school system, an increase of 9 per cent, and an extra 10,282 nurses and midwives, an increase of more than 30 per cent. I guess the fundamental question for the chamber is: what would happen with those opposite when it comes to delivering or cutting? This is what we are really talking about here when we are fundamentally looking at these issues. I know the Leader of the Opposition has already put forward freezing government fees, changes to stamp duty for first home buyers, repealing the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund, abolishing the short-stay accommodation levy and introducing a payroll exemption for high-fee non-government schools. The issue is: how will that be paid for? And this is –

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, this has been a reasonably wide debate. However, the member for Albert Park has veered a very, very long way and is now going on some completely other tangent. I would ask you to, at least in the last 2½ minutes –

Michaela Settle interjected.

Cindy McLeish: No, I am still going. You cannot stand up while I am still going. I am not going to finish; I am going to wait for you to sit down. I have lost my train of thought now. She has not mentioned the bill at all. I ask the member now to actually concentrate on the bill in the last 2 minutes.

Michaela Settle: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, we listened to the lead speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, who failed to mention the bill until 15 minutes in and set up what is a wideranging debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): It is a wideranging debate. We are trying to creep back towards the bill after a wideranging opening contribution, and I ask the member for Albert Park to assist me in that.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes, absolutely. Thank you for your guidance. I would proffer that I have been speaking to what the bill will deliver with regard to mental health reforms, so that is speaking to the bill. I just put that out there for consideration, because there were contrary arguments put as to what might occur were this bill to go ahead. That is why I had to speak to that issue, speaking specifically to elements of the bill and the reforms we have in front of us, just to be really clear on that front.

Another thing I did want to state is that there were points made about our police force, and I would like to say that we actually have more police in Victoria than any other state. We can factor in an investment of $4.5 billion, increasing police by 3600. The opposition leader did speak to this matter, and that is why I am rebutting the matter, and the member might want to hear back the speech of the opposition leader to note why this is relevant to the current discussion. I will say with Taskforce Hawk, this has resulted in more than 70 charges laid against 15 alleged offenders so far, so to suggest that nothing has been done is absolutely incorrect and wrong and false. On that note I do commend these changes to the house.

One final note that I did want to say is that economist Saul Eslake said in the *Australian Financial Review* on 4 February 2026:

> It's not a good look for the opposition to be advocating cutting government spending and then opposing individual measures that are intended to cut costs.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (17:01): I am very pleased to rise to make a contribution to the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025, and I guess the title says it all: it is about consolidation. I think what we need to consider here is the origin of this bill. What is happening? What is the backdrop? What is the context here? The government commissioned Helen Silver AO to conduct a review of Victoria's public service, beginning 20 February 2025, virtually 12 months ago, to be completed by 30 June, and we know that the government sat on it for a very long time before it was finally released on 4 December. In the meantime, around budget time there was an interim report that was delivered. Why was this report commissioned? We had a government with debt spiralling out of control; the government had no idea what to do, how to curb it. Spending also was not controlled. Costs were rising, and in the absence of knowing what to do, because taxes and fees and charges had been increased beyond belief, the government had to start looking for cuts and looking in its own backyard.

I want to draw the house's attention to what the Premier said at the time when that review was introduced. She said the review, led by Helen Silver AO, will 'zero in on waste and inefficiency'. What a laughable matter that is at the moment, when we have $15 billion of money that has been funnelled into organised crime gangs and syndicates and outlaw motorbike gangs – that we have had $15 billion channelled down that way into these illegal organisations and illegal activities and the government was looking to channel here into the waste and inefficiency in the public sector. The Premier then went on to say that this is what we need to do to have good schools, good hospitals and safe communities and to help with the cost of living. I put it to the Premier and to everybody else on the government benches that if they want to tackle waste and inefficiency, owning up to the $15 billion that has been channelled into the wrong areas would be a good start, because we know waste and inefficiency are not areas of priority for the government, and they should be.

In the backdrop of what was happening in the economic context of Victoria and how sad the state has been, the Premier commissioned the review by Helen Silver, and some of the things that we found in this report were no surprise. It is very complex; in fact it is overly complex. It is very fragmented. The public service is top heavy, and there are more than 500 public entities and thousands of boards and committees. What does this mean? This means a lot of duplication and slow decision-making. We hear it all the time about the way the bureaucracy moves – that when you have got level on level of different parts of an organisation and government and reporting mechanisms, it does slow things down. The Silver report looked at savings of about $5 billion, and that is only a third at best of what has been rorted on the Big Build sites. The government say that they have planned to implement the majority of the recommendations from the Silver review, and this in fact was the first tranche. What we understand is that seven recommendations are being acquitted here. The bill amends some 26 different acts, so it is quite significant from that point of view. It is also looking at abolishing six entities, Recycling Victoria among them.

I want to draw the house's attention again to the fanfare when Recycling Victoria came into being. The minister for environment at the time, on 27 October, really talked it up, and now here we are. Recycling Victoria started on 1 July 2022, so only a few years ago, and now this bill brings about the abolition of the head of Recycling Victoria and confers relevant functions to the EPA. That has significant ramifications. I think the government may well have been better advised to bring Helen Silver on at the time, when they were implementing agency after agency and new departments, to ask: actually what will the consequences be, and how will that play out economically for the public sector and the decision-making processes? We have got Sustainability Victoria, we have got Recycling Victoria and we have got the EPA, and a lot of these functions seem to get on top of each other. I think the government really should have a look at what they are doing and analyse the implications for that prior to doing some of these things.

There are a number of other entities being abolished, including the Victorian Marine and Coastal Council. The Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority is being abolished and subsumed by the state. The Victorian Public Sector Commission advisory board is being abolished. The government purchasing

board is going to be abolished and subsumed by other areas. The road safety camera commissioner is also going. There has already been some debate that the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission is going to have a reduction in the number of commissioners. The member for Albert Park can try and paint that in every light that she can; however, the reality is there will be a reduction of the number of commissioners. It did not specify how many it was going to be reduced to, and there were other changes. Some of these things were part of the Silver recommendations. The changes being made to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission go beyond what was identified by the Silver review, and there are a number of other changes that are being made here that were not subject to the Silver review – the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing, which I have touched on; the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council; the Essential Services Commission; the Parliamentary Integrity Adviser; and Parks Victoria, where we are seeing some staff transferred.

There are a couple of things that I do want to mention, and as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, we will be moving some textual amendments in the other place around the Essential Services Commission. We want to see that they retain the rate-capping and commercial passenger vehicle advisory roles. We think that is important. With regard to the mental health and wellbeing commissioners, we would like to see those retained as well – and the Victorian Government Purchasing Board. I just want to touch base firstly on the Essential Services Commission. Removing the independent umpire from scrutinising potential council rate and commercial passenger vehicle charge increases runs the risk of vested interests hiking costs for Victorian residents and consumers by going direct to government. The removal of their advisory role in the establishment of local government rate caps could undermine community confidence in the rate-capping framework, and these ESC changes were not in the Silver review.

As has been canvassed, the changes to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission and the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing do not have the support of the sector and go against key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. Government can talk up all they want what they are doing in mental health; we are not seeing a lot of outcomes there at all. This bill here diminishes the importance of lived experience, so those that have had mental illness and psychological distress or been a family member or carer, in responding to important mental health challenges and reverses the relationship between the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission and the government so that the government now will be sitting in judgement on the work of the commission. I am not sure what the former minister James Merlino would think about some of this, because he was very, very strong in his advocacy here.

This diminishing of the role of the ESC and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commissioner and the abolition of the Victorian Government Purchasing Board are examples of the government's determination to avoid independent scrutiny. We have seen that this week with the Premier's comments about IBAC. We know they do not have the powers that are needed. We know they need greater teeth and powers to follow the money, and the Premier wants to ignore these facts and ignore that they are underfunded. I think that the government could do a lot more in this space.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (17:11): I too rise today to speak to the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. I do so knowing that this is absolutely in line with our state Labor government's priority of delivering high-quality public services but in a financially responsible manner. It does so following the government's commissioning of an independent review, the well-known Silver review, which zeroed in on the ways our government can better ensure that the public sector delivers its essential services while reducing some inefficiencies that may be within it. We called for the review and the review has given its report, and now we are trying to streamline delivery of those services with those world-class efficiencies.

The review found that some entities' functions overlap with the existing work of core departments or they are no longer required. So this bill will acquit recommendations from that review and implement savings committed to in the 2025–26 budget that aim to improve effectiveness in government spending so that we can invest in those things that matter most to Victorians. I know that my constituents in the

fantastic electorate of Narre Warren South want not only a government that is effective but a government that is pragmatic and fiscally responsible as well – one that manages money wisely while investing in and strengthening the essential services that Victorians rely on each and every single day. They expect steady, sensible leadership that builds up our frontline health, education and community services.

Certainly in the time that I have been in this place, Narre Warren South has seen brand new hospitals, brand new schools in the area, new trains, level crossing removals and a vast amount of public infrastructure, including new freeway builds in the outer south-east. These are the sorts of things that are being delivered whilst we are putting these pragmatic, fiscally responsible reductions in place. The public service should be focused entirely on providing Victorians with good schools, good health care, safe communities and real help with the cost of living.

One thing we do know is that there will not be reckless frontline cuts like we have seen in the past from others – cuts that we know the opposition need to fill that massive budget black hole of theirs, one that they have created. Importantly, frontline workers are excluded from the scope of this review. Unlike those opposite, we will never cut nurses, we will never cut teachers, we will never cut police officers or child protection workers. Where possible, we will always prioritise better use of resources, we will reduce duplication and we will realign policy and program functions to ensure priorities are delivered to the highest possible standard, rather than reducing staff. We will be able to consult with staff and their unions, and this will be undertaken by the relevant department if any staff impacts occur as a result of a proposal. The government's priority is to ensure continuity, clarity and confidence throughout the process for staff, partners and the Victorian public.

We know that Victorians rely on the public sector and essential frontline services. That has been made very clear to all of us, whether that is the teachers that help our kids learn, police officers to keep our communities safe or nurses who support us in times of need. At this point I would like to thank all our hardworking public sector staff across my community and of course throughout Victoria. But I reiterate that the changes in this bill do not cut these frontline workers. They do not cut those frontline services. This is about getting back to basics and focusing on the services that matter most to working families.

We know what plan those opposite would have and that it claims to repair Victoria's budget and reduce debt. But we all know what the plan is, and that plan we know is code for cuts in frontline services instead of sensible savings like those that are contained in this bill. We have got your track record. We have seen their track record before.

Members interjecting.

Gary MAAS: Well, let us talk. Let us remember cuts to schools. Let us remember cuts to hospitals. Let us remember cuts to TAFE. We have seen that. But in fact this government has built over 100 new schools. We have built a hundred in the last two terms. This year we built one in my community, in the great suburb of Cranbourne North, one of the greatest growing suburbs in Victoria. We have upgraded and built state-of-the-art hospitals. How great is the new Cranbourne Community Hospital? Let us include an expansion to Casey Hospital in my electorate and further works on the way for a new emergency department as well. And we do not cut TAFE, we actually make it free. These are the things that this responsible bill will continue to allow. There have been more than 225,000 students who have benefited from the free TAFE policy since it began in 2019, getting the skills they want, getting them for free and contributing to the Victorian economy. Those opposite have talked a lot and have so far announced at least $11.1 billion in unfunded commitments, and we know what that means: a real budget black hole that requires explanation.

Members interjecting.

Gary MAAS: Oh, I am coming to that. Just wait your turn. But they have given no indication as to how their announcements will be funded, nor have they fessed up to the fact that to fund these

measures they will have to cut essential services. It is possible that they do not have a plan because they are too busy fighting with themselves. I actually heard the member for Mildura on the radio yesterday fighting about One Nation and what that might mean for her party, for the coalition.

Jade Benham interjected.

Gary MAAS: Well, the question was put to you –

Jade Benham interjected.

Gary MAAS: You are getting very touchy. The member for Mildura is getting very touchy, kicking the can down the road. We all know what you are going to do. We all know what the coalition is going to do when it comes to One Nation.

While they are doing this, we are leading a really strong economy in Victoria, one which ensures that we can continue investing in the things that actually matter to Victorians. The budget at the end of 2025 confirmed this. The economy is forecast to grow by 2.25 per cent this financial year, supported by business investment that has grown faster than any other state over the past three years. Victoria itself continues to lead the nation in job creation, with more than 300,000 jobs that have been added over the past three years. Unemployment is at 4.7 per cent, a historic low. And just out of interest, just in today's *Guardian*, if I can quote economist Saul Eslake, an eminent, well-respected economist – hardly one that we would normally quote on this side of the chamber – when he talks about costs in construction between states and nationally, he points to Victoria as being cheaper than New South Wales and the national figure. Between December 2014 and September 2025 Victoria comes in as the lowest when you compare that to New South Wales and to the national figure. So I am not quite sure where this $15 billion comes from, because it certainly has not added to inflationary pressure in the state of Victoria.

There is a difference between responsible economic management and an opposition that is offering wild and crazy cuts that would impact and hurt families across the board. It is really simple: we build; they cut. I commend this bill to the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (17:21): If I did not laugh, I would cry, honestly, hearing terms from the other side like 'fiscally responsible', 'world-class efficiencies', 'reckless frontline'. The only thing that is reckless –

A member interjected.

Jade BENHAM: The recklessness from the other side is reckless incompetence and the inability to use calculators. You do have to give those on the other side one thing. They are all on message, and they are all singing from the same hymnbook and ignoring the biggest scandal in Victoria's history: that $15 billion has been funnelled into the pockets of bikies and organised crime on government worksites, those government worksites that the member for Narre Warren South was just talking about – schools, trains, infrastructure. Meanwhile, the regions are going without. So please do not lecture us in this place about being fiscally responsible and ignore what has been coming out in this state in the last week.

Like I said, if I did not laugh, I would cry because of the state of Victoria at the moment, particularly in the regions, which are really doing it tough. Within this bill we are talking about the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, which was mentioned by the member for Lowan earlier and the member for Eildon only a few moments ago. I would not call it a talent; it must be quite a trait to have when you can stand up and pretend that there is nothing to see here, and meanwhile Victorians and families cannot get the mental health support they need. This bill continues to give the finger to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. Recommendation 44 was to establish that statutory authority, and this bill undermines that. The restructure of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission reduces the number of commissioners from four to one as well as amending the commissioner's role, expected qualifications and reporting arrangements.

I will tell you why we are so passionate about this. I have had a family in my office this week. This is certainly not the first one this year even; I have dealt with this system time and time again from a carer's point of view. The failure of local and regional mental health systems is already at breaking point, and this government has done very little to meet the recommendations of the mental health royal commission, which is an absolute shame and disgrace in this state. When I have people coming into my office in tears, crying because they cannot get the support that they need in the regions, I have to sit there and tell them, 'Well, that same government is also now cutting that commission that was put in place to improve things for Victorians.' That is what we are faced with in the regions.

I am going to tell you a story about Ian, because giving these cuts real-life context is really important. I had Ian's family come into the office. They told me that over the past at least 28 days – but it probably started around November, post surgery – the family repeatedly sought help as they watched Ian's mental health deteriorate to the point where he was no longer able to care for himself. Despite multiple presentations to Mildura Base Public Hospital's emergency department – on the first one he presented himself because he recognised that he was unwell, and there was also ongoing contact with mental health services, police welfare checks and GP involvement – no effective treatment plan or continuity of care was ever provided. Over the continuing weeks what followed was an alarming pattern of inaction and responsibility shifting, despite the clear signs of paranoia, delusion, agitation and inability to self-care, even absconding behaviour in extreme heat – and we have had in excess of two weeks over 40 degrees – and complete reliance on family members for 24-hour supervision. The mental health services had to repeatedly decline to intervene. Family carers were told to manage him at home; Ian lives alone. They were advised to focus on self-care and instructed only to return to emergency if they could no longer cope.

They came to me because they could no longer cope and could not get the support and help that they needed. Mental health services refused to act without MRI results, and then they failed to intervene even after those results were obtained and showed no abnormalities. The family was told that it would be unsafe to admit Ian and yet was given no alternative pathway to help. At no point was there ever a treatment plan, an outpatient support plan or any meaningful duty of care established, and the toll that has taken on family members has been incredibly immense. So I had to tell them that I can raise this, I can certainly ask questions and I can reach out to the minister. But, guess what, this government this coming sitting week is actually going to amend the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission and take those commissioners down to one, which completely undermines the work of the royal commission once again. We see this time and time and time again.

The email that I originally received made some excellent, articulate points:

> This situation raises serious concerns about how people experiencing severe mental illness are managed in regional Victoria …

This is not unique to my electorate; this happens all over the regions and no doubt in the city also. It goes on to say that it raises concerns about:

> … how people experiencing severe mental illness are managed in regional Victoria, particularly when they do not neatly meet admission thresholds but are clearly unsafe and deteriorating.

The author requested that I raise the broader concerns about access to timely mental health care in Mildura and similar regional communities, because, as the member for Lowan stated earlier, suicide rates in this state are at an all-time high. So for this government to flick the finger to the royal commission and do this to the sector – and meanwhile the sector are screaming out for more support; they are incredibly upset and have been for a long time – is just mind-blowing. Meanwhile we have members in this place talking about how they are not going to cut frontline services through this bill. While we have $15 billion of taxpayer money going into the pockets of bikies and organised crime, there are some efficiencies that we can certainly use.

That is why when I got up to speak on this bill, first of all, I said you have to laugh because otherwise you would cry. And I did cry with Ian's family last week, because it is a simple fact that the regions

and the people simply do not matter to this government. They simply do not, and that is illustrated every single day. We see it every single day.

That is why we get so passionate – I will use the term 'passionate' – listening to the debates that come from the other side. I get that it must be very, very hard to stick to the message and read from the talking points when they do not believe them themselves. I tell you what, if they believe what is coming out of their mouths half the time then we have a bigger problem than we originally anticipated, because they are blatantly misleading and gaslighting the Victorian public, and they know it. The anger on the ground is palpable – absolutely palpable. When you actually get out into your communities and talk to people, the anger on the ground is at boiling point. Is it any wonder there are fringe parties trying to make a play to oust this rotten, stinking Labor government in Victoria?

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (17:31): I also rise to make a contribution on the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. It is a piece of legislation that will reform a number of different agencies in the public sector. Before I go on to that, I do want to respond to some of the claims that were made by the member for Mildura, particularly in relation to this government's treatment of mental health. Do we need to do more on mental health? Absolutely. This is why we look back on the royal commission, which recognised that we have a huge problem and that we need to do a lot more.

Since the royal commission was announced and started to be implemented, we have invested more than any other government in mental health support, particularly at the front line. We have invested more than $600 million to support, retain and grow the workforce, commissioning 2500 FTE employees since 2021. We have delivered more than 170 acute beds for adults, young people, women, older Victorians and Hospital in the Home. That includes some additional mental health beds at Box Hill hospital, which has a significant mental health unit. As the member for Mildura said, this is across the state. It does not discriminate based on postcode and it does not discriminate based on your level of economic standing. It can strike anyone. Members in here have talked about their own mental health challenges that they have faced.

We have also as a government established a Mental Health Capital Renewal Fund, which received another $10 million in the 2025–26 budget for mental health and alcohol and other drug ED hubs. The commission said that we needed a dedicated hub in each region, and we have provided five hubs already that are operational, and another eight are in the pipeline. We are putting our money where our mouth is in terms of mental health supports, and that has happened from day one of the announcement of the royal commission.

There are two particular instances that I want to go back to and reflect on. The first one was when the royal commission was presented. Many members would remember that was done at the Royal Exhibition Building, and it was an opportunity for those with lived experiences and the commissioner and the Premier to speak – it might have been the Acting Premier at the time – as well as the Leader of the Opposition, whoever that was at the time. I think it was five or six opposition leaders ago. I distinctly remember the presentation of the Leader of the Opposition, who talked about our transport infrastructure projects as a way of trying to, I suppose, deflect from mental health.

I felt that was a really inappropriate way of actually addressing what was a serious issue. We had announced the royal commission and we were trying to really shed a light on the mental health challenges that so many Victorians suffer. Then I look at the funding. Obviously several months after that it came out of the royal commission that we needed to put through legislation to fund these mental health supports, and we did so by developing a hypothecated fund that was attached to the payroll tax for the largest businesses in the state, which was opposed by those opposite. Those opposite can talk about how there is not enough funding in mental health and decry any form of cut, even if it is a cut to an entity which is not a cut to the frontline services in mental health. But if they were to pursue this purpose of not wanting this payroll tax, this levy, to go towards all of these mental health services, the staff, the support hubs and all of that support network, then where is that money going to come from?

Now they are calling for more money, and I think that call is a good one. Where possible we should be supporting more funding into mental health. But it is not going to come through larger cuts to revenue, which are being proposed by those opposite.

I do want to get back to the broader pieces of legislation and entities that are identified in this bill, and I also want to refer back to the initial Silver review, which is the basis for why we are going through this process of consolidating the entities. The Silver review found that Victoria currently has more than 500 public entities and 3400 boards which the report said were costly and unwieldy. As you would expect, it also concluded that these arrangements come at a substantial direct and indirect cost to government, with public entities estimated to have a total of around $35 billion in annual operating expenditure.

There is a real, sound reason and justification to be looking at, as any government should on a regular basis, what is the most appropriate and efficient way to be running the government and be running the agencies and all the programs that it delivers. Looking at those entities, many of the entities were set up and created for a specific purpose and often to really focus in on a particular area at a particular time. Once they are established and once they have an established operating pattern, it can make sense to actually subsume and consolidate those agencies into other agencies that perform a similar role and have staff in place that can continue that operation. For example, I know there was some talk before about Recycling Victoria. The work that Recycling Victoria has done is very important, and I think the message of recycling – the whole cycle of recycling, if I can use that term – has been a very important priority of the government. But it makes sense at this stage to wrap those services and those functions into an organisation like the Environment Protection Authority Victoria. This will help clarify the roles, it will reduce the fragmentation and it will strengthen the end-to-end regulation of the waste and resource recovery sector.

This is, I would say, the reason and the focus of all of the recommendations in the Silver review: looking at the government as a whole and looking at all of the agencies that we have and saying, 'Well, at an administrative level, how can we do that better? How can we run those services and functions of government more efficiently, particularly on the administrative side?' By doing this, the value of savings that would come out of this program has been talked about; we want to avoid reducing frontline services because, as was talked about in the debate about mental health, we need to make sure that we retain the budgetary position to protect those mental health frontline workers, to protect our education frontline workers and to protect our police frontline workers. In conclusion, this is a strong bill, and I support it.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (17:41): I also rise to address the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. In doing so I acknowledge the contribution on behalf of the opposition by the member for Kew in engaging with stakeholders and taking the lead on this bill from an opposition perspective. I note her work and that of her office in engaging with colleagues, and I note the work of those colleagues.

As has been noted by a number of other speakers, this is a far-reaching bill, a wideranging bill, covering many, many different areas of government responsibility. This bill seeks to amend matters relating to the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021, the Environment Protection Act 2017, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001, the Marine and Coastal Act 2018, the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Act 2003, the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978, the Forests Act 1958, the Land Act 1958, the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990, the National Parks Act 1975, the Wildlife Act 1975 – my goodness – the Reference Areas Act 1978, the Public Administration Act 2004, the Financial Management Act 1994, the Road Safety Camera Commissioner Act 2011, the Ombudsman Act 1973, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022, the Local Government Act 1989, the Essential Services Commission Act 2001 – I will come back to that; that is one that I would like to park for further comment – the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 and the Accident Towing Services Act 2007. Did you know

about that, Acting Speaker? It is disorderly of me to ask a question of you, but I ask perhaps rhetorically. I did not realise we had an Accident Towing Services Act until such time as this bill was introduced.

A member interjected.

Brad ROWSWELL: You learn something every day. Here we are. It amends the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024 – yes, we know about that, and I will be coming back to that one as well – the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Act 2020, the Sustainability Victoria Act 2005 and the Climate Action Act 2017. So a number of acts, many of them known and many of them unknown, being amended as part of this consolidation and other matters bill proposed by the government.

I would like to concentrate my attention on just a couple of areas of this bill being considered by the house today. The first is in relation to the proposed abolishment of the Victorian Government Purchasing Board and its replacement by ministerial and departmental oversight. Now, in relation to this in particular, I acknowledge that the VGPB, Victorian Government Purchasing Board, does have responsibility within the Department of Government Services, DGS, for whole-of-government procurement, but that does not include procurement relating to Big Build projects – construction-related work. I am saying this as I hold shadow portfolio responsibilities for the government services portfolio. I think that in practice what Victorians might assume when they hear that the government has in fact a Victorian Government Purchasing Board is that there are an adequate framework and an adequate set of controls in place to ensure that hardworking Victorian taxpayers are getting good bang for their buck. Hardworking Victorian taxpayers might be disheartened to hear that as part of these changes proposed by the government today this Victorian Government Purchasing Board is in fact being abolished and replaced with ministerial and departmental oversight.

I think hardworking Victorian taxpayers and families would also be keen to understand what checks and balances this government has in place to ensure that their hardworking Victorian taxpayer dollars are achieving best bang for buck. Applying a private sector mentality to procurement processes just for a second, there is purchasing power and there are a number of other frameworks and processes in place which ensure that in the private sector best bang for buck is achieved. I think that is a standard principle – perhaps not articulated as well as it could be, but a standard principle nonetheless – which should be applied to government and which I think Victorian taxpayers apply through an expectation lens to government.

I also think it is highly curious that the established purchasing board is now being replaced with ministerial and departmental oversight. I think there are legitimate questions, especially considering the events of the last week, that Victorian taxpayers may very well have. Is ministerial and departmental oversight really the best place to house what was a body, an organ of government, a quango? I heard the member for Greenvale refer to it as a quango, and it is. Not many people know it is a quango. I do, and so does the member for Greenvale. It is one of the reasons I like him. Is ministerial and departmental oversight, given the events of the last week, in fact the best way to ensure best taxpayer bang for buck? I just raise that as a question. I do not think it is, is my answer. I actually think that the procurement function within the Victorian government should not be housed within the Department of Government Services at all. In fact I think that the Department of Government Services is not the right place for this important function of government to be housed. I would suggest to the government that, if I was to wave a magic wand and have that influence upon government at the moment, it should be housed within the Department of Treasury and Finance. I see the member for Werribee looking at me intently at the minute. That suggests to me that he is next on his feet and he is just looking for an opportunity to just needle me in some unfair and perhaps unparliamentary way, but I do not mean to reflect upon him before he has had the opportunity to do so. I think that it should be housed within the Department of Treasury and Finance, and I think that should be something that the Labor government considers.

I am concerned by the proposed changes to the structure and role of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission of the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing. I am concerned that the government does not have the support of the sector to go against key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. I do commend the contribution of my colleague the member for Lowan in that regard, and I would encourage the government to reconsider the changes as proposed in this bill.

I did say at the start that I would be coming back to the Essential Services Commission. I do believe that removing the independent umpire, the ESC, from scrutinising potential council rates and commercial passenger vehicle charge increases does run the risk of particular interests hiking costs onto Victorian taxpayers and consumers by going directly to government without that independent umpire in place. I do believe that in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis where Victorian families are finding it hard to make ends meet and being pulled and pushed and stretched in every other direction and life is becoming harder for them and not easier, it is important to have an independent umpire for them to go to plead the case to and to be judge and jury over such potential cost increases that Victorian taxpayers and consumers may face. I do also note that although the government have gripped all these changes up through the prism of implementation of the Silver review, this particular change relating to the ESC was not actually contained within the Silver review, which is interesting. We have seen the government do this on a number of occasions before.

In conclusion, as has been flagged by previous speakers on this side, we will not be opposing this bill. But I do encourage the government to get their procurement practices and processes right, and I have a question mark over whether what is proposed in this bill is actually good for Victorian taxpayers.

John LISTER (Werribee) (17:51): The member for Sandringham was correct, I am up next to rise and speak in support of the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. I promise the house that I will remain parliamentary, as I always do, despite the aspersions from the member for Sandringham. It should be the priority of every level of government to deliver quality public services in a financially responsible manner, so that is why we are doing it. We are reducing inefficiencies so that we can continue to invest in the things that matter to Victorians and continue the mandate that this government was elected on. This includes scaling back programs where the original aims have been achieved, such as in some of the cases that I will read through in a moment, but also looking at where that level investment is no longer required, programs are no longer required or where in some cases there is duplication, which I will come to in a very big way. This government knows where its heart and priorities are. They are in good schools, such as recent upgrades that we are starting at Manorvale Primary School in my electorate; better transport, like the route 194, connecting new and growing communities around the west of my electorate; or greater investment in our healthcare system, like the expansion of the Werribee hospital emergency department.

Labor's investment in the things that matter to Victorians is important, and it is important that we continue to review how we deliver these in a fiscally responsible manner. The Silver review, as many speakers have spoken about, goes a lot to how we can avoid this duplication, how we can avoid programs that are doing things that are now being done in other spaces or may not necessarily be required. It is a hard thing to do to have these sorts of reviews and ensure that frontline services remain well funded and continue but also make sure that we look into the public service, which is a big beast and something I have had a lot to do with over the years. It is a big beast with lots of different elements to it that we can streamline and make more efficient. In fact I would say this is probably the most small-l liberal thing a government can do, and the champions of the free market – or supposed champions of the free market – on the other side should be all for it. I do note that the member for Kew and the member for Sandringham have said that they do not oppose this bill in this house, although they will move amendments later on. I think it would be very nice if they came clean with what those amendments will be and what they will look like. But I will return to the bill itself and what it means.

This bill will abolish, reform and consolidate a number of different public entities. It will streamline a lot of that Victoria public service work that is done, look at subsuming different residual required functions for the Crown, improve the consistency of certain acts, repeal a couple of acts that have been spoken about at great length and put in place other reforms for other purposes. Some of the different amendments that we are looking at are around the Recycling Victoria program and what that looks like; the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council and the functions that they do; the Marine and Coastal Act 2018 and how that works; the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority; the Victorian Public Sector Commission Advisory Board, which sounds very Kafkaesque, if I may add; and of course the Victorian Government Purchasing Board, which, after 15 minutes of contribution by the member for Kew, was what she eventually landed on as part of her chief criticism of this bill as it stands, although she does not formally oppose it.

One of the issues identified through the Silver review is duplication of functions. The member for Kew referred to the winding up of this purchasing board. They related this board's functions to what we have seen in the news around construction industry procurement allegations. I do thank the member for Sandringham for acknowledging that the procurement board does not have those construction procurement functions, as it is a thing. We did go through an interesting thought bubble. I appreciate it; that is why I was so gripped by what you were saying.

I do want to reflect a little bit on the focus of this purchasing board and what that means. With a small amount of research, the member for Kew would have found before her contribution that it did not deal with construction, despite the connection, albeit tenuous, that she was trying to make. It is a remnant of a previous Liberal government era, an era that still wants to direct the member for Kew on her political decisions, unfortunately, as we have seen in the paper – you know, warming up Jeff Kennett every now and then. The soon-to-be-wound-up board is guided by principles in their policy of these four things: value for money, accountability, probity and scalability. Just keep those four things in mind. The duplication is blatantly obvious when you look at procurement policies between other departments.

I have had a bit to do with this particular procurement policy: the Department of Education procurement policy. That cites the four things that we need to ensure are value for money, accountability, probity and scalability. It sounds familiar. I looked too to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. I have always got to remember that one; it used to be called the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning when I was in the game, but they have changed the name. The four things that they need to look for in their procurement policy are value for money, accountability, probity and scalability. It sounds familiar. There is a literal duplication of policies that this old purchasing board was probably one of the pioneers of, which is very important to acknowledge. However, it is now happening in every one of our departments. No other state has a standalone procurement board like the one we are seeing being wound up through this bill. The member for Kew has cited budget repair and reducing debt as their priority; here we have a bill that does exactly that. I would think that those champions of economic liberalism would support such efficiencies, considering that they are literally duplicating functions. I know it is not only in the wording of their policy, it is also in a lot of the checks and balances that go through these internal department processes for procuring government services that are obviously non-construction, as we have established here.

It is important to remember that as we look at finding these efficiencies in the public service – and before I go on I would like to acknowledge all of our Victorian public service workers. I know many of them very well, not just teachers but many of those here in Spring Street, Collins Street, Exhibition Street and all the other streets around Melbourne where we have our VPS workers. I do acknowledge the hard work that they do. There are VPS workers and people as part of our public service that perform frontline services that we rely on. These changes are sensible and support our plan for responsible fiscal management. Those different five pillars that we talk about, particularly about being in

operational surplus this year and moving to reduce that ratio of gross state product to debt ratio, all of those are really important.

Today there are more frontline services for Victorians. There are more police and PSOs since we have been in government. And you know, each time they bring up the old FTE data where they cherrypick one date to another, I would like to remind them that it was this government that funded 3500 new police, and we see around 50 new recruits out onto the streets from the academy every round that they do. We have got an extra 3890 teachers in our government school system delivering that frontline education that we need out in our community, particularly in our growing suburbs. We have got more nurses and midwives, an increase of more than 30 per cent. I do fear for what would happen to these frontline services under a government led by those opposite, because we can be guaranteed of one thing: if those opposite are elected, it will be cuts to these frontline services. It is in their bones. Unfortunately, that small-l liberalism that we have seen in the development of the Silver review and in the understanding of how our VPS should work is not reflected by those opposite. It is more brutal. It is the red line through each budget item that they can find to make up for their $11.1 billion black hole, which they are still yet to explain.

There has been a lot of discussion on both sides about what this really means, but I think it is particularly important to remember that this means that we are delivering services more efficiently and more appropriately and avoiding that duplication in what is one of the biggest public services in any of the states here in Australia. We do have to acknowledge that there will be those transition arrangements, and I thank the different unions for the work they do representing our public sector workers. As we work through this, there will be changes to the way that we do this, but it is particularly important for me to be able to go back to my community in Werribee, and for all of us to go back to our communities, to say that we know times are hard and we are making sure government is being delivered as efficiently as possible. I commend this bill to the house.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (18:01): It is my pleasure to make a contribution around the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. It is a pretty exciting bill name and obviously equally exciting subject matter for the most part, but I do want to focus on some of the changes around mental health, which I think are substantive and worthy of discussion and, in my view, worthy of challenge. I also want to reflect more broadly on some of the budget settings that got us to this point. I will start by talking a little about the Silver review. The reality is that you do not need a Silver review if every single minister is doing their job. You do not need a Silver review if the expenditure review committee is doing its job. You do not need a Silver review if all of the appropriate fiscal discipline is part of the language and the operation and the mode of government. A Silver review comes in and identifies a whole bunch of waste – well, those things ought to be identified by ministers each and every day in the administration of their departments.

Let us talk for a moment, shall we, about the enormous elephant in the room. The reason the government finds itself here, staring down the barrel of $200 billion of net debt by 2028–29 – that is in just four years time, expecting net debt to reach nearly $200 billion – is because of the ego-fuelled massive overreach on infrastructure because of the previous Premier, Daniel Andrews. That is why we are here. That is why the fiscal problems facing the state are in fact as they are. It is only for those two reasons: ministers not executing enough discipline within their remit, and of course the massive overextension. We have bitten off as a state way more than we can chew in terms of the infrastructure that is needed, and now of course we discover that the infrastructure has not been built very efficiently because the CFMEU have got their mitts in all of those contracts and are making it very, very, very, very expensive to deliver infrastructure in this state. Driven by ego, driven by corruption, driven by incompetence, we find ourselves in a set of circumstances where you need to exercise substantially more fiscal discipline, a job I would say that should be front and centre for every single minister in this place and the other place right across the Victorian government, but clearly those ministers have not been exercising, to anything like the necessary degree, their responsibilities in that regard.

The public sector has grown by 45 per cent in a decade. Population has grown by 18 per cent in that time. That only happens if people are asleep at the wheel and if there is not enough attention to the detail of budget expansion, budget growth and headcount growth the entire time. The Silver review found that executive layers have expanded disproportionately. There are now 500 public entities and 3400 boards and committees, and interest payments of course are rushing up to $10 billion annually. The state is overextended. There needs to be some fiscal discipline. I just query whether this particular bill is doing much in that regard. The savings are, frankly, modest out of this bill and they do not address the massive elephant in the room, as I have already identified.

Let us talk about some of these things. The Silver review has recommended abolishing 78 entities, up to 90 advisory committees and 300-odd senior executive roles and having better embedded central oversight over spending. They are fine goals, but of course this bill is delivering a tiny fraction of those recommendations, and in fact it is delivering some things that fell outside of the Silver review's recommendations. We know that complexity has a fiscal cost, duplication has a delivery cost and hierarchy has a time cost. These are all the challenges of running an efficient public service, and sadly that is not what we have in Victoria at the moment. The public service has grown and bloated and is no longer as efficient as it was. I think probably in the first term of the Andrews government it was tracking pretty well, but there has just been a lack of discipline subsequent to that and of course a massive overreach – too many infrastructure projects that we simply cannot afford.

I want to talk about two specific reforms, both of them around the mental health space, and in particular the recommendations that were embraced fulsomely by the Andrews and Allan governments, as they should have. But they are now, in a way that I do not think delivers much in the way of cost savings, seeking to tweak the model and remove one of the core principles.

We spent a lot of time in this place, I think before your election, Acting Speaker Mullahy, talking about the implementation of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, which you know full well of course, as you were working adjacent to government at that time. But we spent a lot of time talking about that and the importance of lived experience. That was one of the absolute central tenets of what the royal commission brought down. What we are now seeing are some changes that I think, sadly, move away from that central tenet.

The Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing is about connecting lived and living experience leadership with the service delivery and the research; that is its role. In order to transform the mental health system – and it still needs transformation – you need to bring together those who lead those things. So what does this bill do? It reduces the number of board members – yes, maybe. I do not know how expensive those board members are. I do not know what the exact retainers are for those individual board members, but there is potentially some value in streamlining that. You certainly do not want over large boards. I have been on a couple of over large boards and they do not work very well, so I think you would probably get comfortable with that. But I am a bit concerned about taking out directors, particularly those that were hypothecated to being lived experience directors, and making changes that ultimately make it harder for that lived experience perspective to be brought to the table.

That brings me to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, which is a more substantial body. That is the independent statutory authority that holds government to account for the performance, quality and safety of Victoria's mental health and wellbeing system. First principle: do you need a commission? I would say probably, because the failures in this space have been so substantial over such a long period of time, and it is really hard to get the machinery of a health system operating differently. So I think there is a good public policy justification for the existence of a commission.

It is curious, some of the architecture that was put in place at the time, particularly where you had commissioners and co-CEOs, I understand – and I stand to be corrected on that. In other parts of government you might have a commissioner, like in the case of the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission; you have a commissioner and they are the CEO. But in other

parts of government – I will use a federal example, the Australian Human Rights Commission – you have various commissioners that tend to have quite siloed or preordained policy focuses as commissioners, and you might have a CEO working to run the organisation. What is being proposed here are some changes to that structure which make it just a single commissioner. In this circumstance where the commissioner is not the CEO, I do not understand why you need to just have a single commissioner, because then you have got a CEO and a single commissioner not making decisions jointly. One is answerable to the other, and that I think actually makes the model more cumbersome, potentially, or creates enormous capacity for conflict.

The accepted Western structuring premise is that you gather the wisdom, you get all your stakeholders to have a say – voters in our case – and they elect a bunch of people, representatives, to represent their views in the appropriate body, like the board in this case. You then appoint executives to do the work of that organisation, shaped by the board. That is the core premise. What you have here now is a board of one, in effect – the single commissioner – and the effect of that is to abolish the hypothecated position of a lived-experience commissioner. It is really, really important that they are proposing this bill take away that role, because that is a critical role; it is a core tenet of the system. In this circumstance it would seem to me that the commissioners are the ones who are meant to bring the wisdom of their stakeholder set together to provide direction to the executive, so getting rid of a bunch of commissioners in that circumstance does not make a lot of sense on the face of it. This is under clauses 115 and 119, making changes to the primary act; that is, the mechanism by which the four-commissioner model is abolished and their duties reallocated.

Sadly I have run short of time. I would ask the government to look very, very closely at whether its longstanding promise around embedding lived experience in the mental health system is being delivered, because it is just so important.

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (18:11): I rise to speak on Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. I rise to speak on this bill because I think it says so much about where this government is at. This is a responsible bill, and it is making sure that every dollar we spend is focused on Victorians. I have listened to the contributions from the other side and felt so often throughout them that, indeed, their contributions to these bills seem to be focused on Labor, on a forthcoming election, and not on the people of Victoria. The current Leader of the Opposition spent her entire address talking about matters that are in the newspaper today rather than focusing on this bill; I think it was in the last 5 minutes that there was even a reference to this bill.

I find it extraordinary that we have an opposition that, really, should be standing with us to try and find ways to support Victorians through careful and measured bills like this around consolidation. We have made it very, very clear in this bill that we are not going to cut frontline services. I hear the objections from the other side to this bill, and it puts fear in my heart because I think, 'What then? What then will they go to, should they ever have the reins?' They have made it very clear that they have a huge black hole. They talk endlessly about the cuts to taxes they are going to make – and it is important to understand that those taxes are government revenue. If they are going to be cutting that revenue, then they have got to tell us what services they are going to cut. They like to pretend that this is not a real figure, but indeed, if one adds up the commitments they have made to cut government revenue, then that, ergo, means they have to cut government services and that means frontline services that Victorians absolutely rely on. That is something that this government will never, ever do.

I know that in the time I have been in this place I have seen the many, many ways that this government has supported Victorians on so many levels. One that is particularly dear to my heart of course is free TAFE. It has been an absolute game changer in the regions and a game changer for women. I did note in a previous speech that, looking at *Hansard*, the only time that the Leader of the Opposition has ever mentioned free TAFE was to describe it as a waste of money. That sends cold chills down my spine, because if those on the other side believe that supporting women into the workforce, supporting people to start a new career, is a waste of money, it makes me question what else they will cut, should they ever be in power. This bill is a very responsible and careful review of government expenditure.

Obviously it comes out of the Silver review, and it has looked at ways that we can address these issues without cutting any sort of frontline services.

Those on the other side like to tell us endlessly about the horror financial situation that we are in. I was out doorknocking on the weekend, and I was chatting to someone about it, and what people really have to understand is that this government is working under an operational surplus. What that means is that we are spending the amount of money that we take in, with a little bit left over. I personally believe governments should operate in that way. I want my tax dollars to go towards services for Victorians. We get a lot of scaremongering from those on the other side about the financial state of Victoria. It is indeed scaremongering. If you look at any of the indications, our economy is growing. I know in regional Victoria we have very low unemployment. I think that it is a crying shame that those on the other side use their time in this place to belittle Victoria and put fear into Victorians' hearts. I would say that when they come to speak on this bill, which is a very reasonable bill, trying to look at ways that we can expect efficiencies, it is sad that they speak so strongly against it. Of course I wonder, given that it is a bill that is all about fiscal management, why we have not heard from the Shadow Minister for Finance. She has not spoken at all today. Does she have nothing to say on what is a bill that is really about the fiscal management of this state? She feels that she does not need to speak on it.

As I say, what really concerns me is that those on the other side, to plug their $11 billion hole, will be looking towards our frontline services. I just want to point out that, since 2019, we have 670 more police and PSOs, 3890 more teachers and over 10,000 additional nurses and midwives. They are numbers, but they are also people, and they are people that serve the people of Victoria. I noted that the member for Mildura spent her contribution what could only be said to be criticising frontline mental health staff when she outlined a constituent's journey through the mental health framework in her area. She seemed to consistently say that the person was not given a program, and that seemed to be a criticism of mental health workers. Nowhere in this bill do we talk in any way about cutting those frontline people or cutting those services. So it seemed to be a very strange way to look at this bill, which in essence is talking about bringing a single commissioner model to the table. In no way would that impact her constituent in Mildura.

I would also, as a regional MP, like to call out a couple of comments from the member for Mildura about this government's lack of care or concern for regional communities. I have the great honour of representing a big regional community, and I am delighted to work alongside the member for Wendouree and the member for Ripon, and I know that we all fight every day for our communities. The support from our communities shows that we are there for them, and they know we are there. I do wonder if the member for Mildura is indeed more worried about a contest with One Nation in her seat, or with an independent who has previously held the seat. To suggest that people in regional Victoria do not feel represented by this government is sheer insanity. I have said it before, but our regional caucus is made up of over 18 MPs, and that is pretty close to the entire number of the Liberal Party – certainly it would be four times the number of Nats. I think that unless she is saying the people of regional Victoria do not know what they are talking about, their votes express that pretty confidently and they do believe that Labor delivers for people in the region, but I digress.

In my final moments I would just like to commend this bill to the house. I think it is about responsible government. People in my community want to know that as a government we are out there trying to find efficiencies to support them and that we will never cut those frontline services. These efficiencies come out of the Silver review, and it is just about improving effectiveness across government. I know that people in my electorate are tightening their belts, and they want to see that government is doing that as well. This bill goes to show that we are seeking those efficiencies within our bureaucracy without impacting the frontline services. We all know what happened last time those on the other side were in government and they cut our frontline services, and people of Victoria will remember that, particularly in regional Victoria.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (18:21): I rise to speak on the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025, and previous speakers on this side have addressed quite

eloquently our concerns about the risks to proper and genuine oversight on government spending, whether it is the Essential Services Commission, the government purchasing board or the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, which is so important to delivering on those mental health recommendations that came out of the royal commission.

What I wanted to do in adding to the commentary from this side of the house and echoing that we will not be opposing the bill in this house is just to add some reflections around the context of this bill, why it is being brought forward and why we should have no confidence that any of the savings that the government professes it will secure will be secured, because on past form the government has shown that they will not.

First of all, when you look at the savings measures that the government has announced in the last two budgets, as the Auditor-General has pointed out, the government is nowhere near achieving even those savings. Whilst any savings will be welcome in this fiscal climate and given the parlous state of Victoria's finances under this government, we cannot have any confidence that the savings that the government is identifying in this bill will be similarly achieved.

What I really want to talk about is why the government does not seem to appreciate the urgency of the situation and why it has not done nearly enough to structure the Victorian budget in a way which will lead to better outcomes for Victorians. When you look at the fiscal aggregates around the Victorian budget, if you look at some of the key ones, you can see why the government has inverted the way the budget should be structured if you are to deliver a higher standard of living and lower cost of living in Victoria.

First of all, I want to talk about the growth in taxes. If you look at the budget projections in last May's budget, each of payroll, land transfer duty and land tax are all going up, year on year, on average by 5.1 per cent or more – 5.1 per cent or more on average every year. If you look at the interest on Victoria's spiralling debt, the actual quantum, it is going up by around about 11 per cent or more year on year. If you look at net debt, it is going up by around about 4 to 5 per cent year on year. The reason I mention those is that they are bad enough on their own, but when you compare them with other fiscal aggregates, you can start to see the picture I cited before. If you look at the growth projections in the budget, last May the government projected that growth would be 2.5 per cent this year. In the budget update in December, it downgraded that to 2.25 per cent. Last May it projected growth next year of 2.75 per cent. In December, in its update, it downgraded that to 2.5 per cent. The actual result for 2024–25, which the government projected to be 2 per cent, came in at just over half, at 1.1 per cent.

The reason I want to spend some time talking about the growth rates is because we have a budget that is so structured that tax rates are going up by 5 per cent year on year, interest payments are going up by 11 per cent year on year and the net debt figure is going up year to year by between 4 and 5 per cent but the economy is only growing, if last year's figure is to be believed, at 1.1 per cent. The IMF only this week downgraded its growth forecast and has the national economy growing at 2.1 per cent, so we are in a low-growth environment. The rising Australian dollar was not factored in when the government delivered its May budget last year or the budget update. They did not factor in a rising Australian currency, which retards growth even further. It puts downward pressure on growth. My point is if you are a government claiming to have a fiscal strategy that delivers higher growth and higher jobs and attracts investment, you cannot structure the budget like that. You have to invert that is what I meant before. Wages are growing at less than taxes, interest and debt. When you look at those aggregates, the picture is not good. Employment growth is only 1.5 per cent and going down, yet Victoria has the highest unemployment rate in the country, and the government's own budget forecasts have it rising to 4.75 per cent. Again, compare and contrast those fiscal aggregates. It does not paint a very reassuring picture.

When we look at this bill and we look at the government claiming that it will deliver these savings and turn the budget around, it is hard to believe that it will achieve it, because of the aggregates I just mentioned and the analysis I just provided. But also the government has form on not delivering on its

own savings targets. It has not met any of them. You can go to the Auditor-General's financial report to look at that. It is hard to see how that will be achieved.

What does all this mean? It means Victorians are losing out. Life is getting harder, the cost of living is going up and our standard of living is coming down. I have just a few examples of what I mean. You have heard us talk at length on the CFMEU, and we will have much more to say. We have long had a position of a royal commission. It is the only way to get to the truth. It is the only way we will get to a point where criminal charges can be referred to either Victoria Police or other law enforcement agencies. I also certainly hope that civil actions can be undertaken as well to recover losses, whether that is from private firms that were the subject of CFMEU blackmail and intimidation or whether the government has rights under contracting and tendering arrangements to recover, whether it is $15 billion or more, whatever it is. We should be seeking to recover as much of that money as we can. But think about what has been lost because of that money that has bled out to criminals.

It is not just the CFMEU. The government's mismanagement, the blowouts and the debt have meant there is only one crew in Victoria that is cutting anything, and it is the Allan Labor government. I say to all Victorians, if you want an example of how savage Labor's cuts to services are, get this: this government slashed nearly $2.5 billion from education by punting its own Gonski commitment down the road. We have a totally unacceptable situation in this great state of ours where families and school communities in government schools have to raise money to pay staff. The government says it has a building program. Well, I would like to see it, because in my electorate schools have walls that are crumbling. There is plaster falling from the roofs and the ceilings.

Health is the same. Wonthaggi, Dandenong, West Gippsland, Maroondah: all health commitments that this government has cut, slashed. This government has slashed health funding to the point where we have a waiting list that is growing – not falling, growing. We have communities that support our public health networks and that in one instance had to use moneys that were raised by a local charity to fund artwork in the hospital. Now, artwork in a hospital is important. You want the aesthetic environment to be important. That is a sign of how savage the cuts to services for Victorians are under this government, which cannot manage our economy. And that is the consequence of the level of financial mismanagement and the consequence of turning a blind eye to criminal and corrupt conduct in our construction industry.

It gets even worse, because we are left with a state where there is a growing catalogue of inequities. I look at the electorate of the member for Melton – a good man – Thornhill Park, areas like Mount Atkinson, estates that are growing up that have no infrastructure, no services to support those growing communities. In the south-east, in the north, in Kalkallo and in other parts of our growing state there is no money for basic infrastructure. If the member for Melton were being candid, he would concede that his own community has been starved of vital funding to support our growing communities. If you do not manage the budget, if you do not manage the economy, Victorians suffer. Their services are being cut under this government, and they are not getting the infrastructure and the standard of living they are entitled to receive in this great state of ours. It is time for a change. That change cannot come soon enough.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (18:31): I enjoy following the member for Hawthorn. He should get his facts right. He should come out to Thornhill Park – that is, if he knows where it is. The infrastructure out there – we have built primary schools, we have contributed to the build of an early learning centre, a community centre, a railway station at Cobblebank, a new bus service for Thornhill Park to Cobblebank. There is a hell of a lot going on out at Thornhill Park. I invite the member for Hawthorn to come out, and I will buy him a cup of coffee at the shopping centre out there. Hopefully, if he has got a bit of spare time and avoids any future legal cases, he could come out there and spend some time with us, and I would welcome him.

I rise today to contribute on the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. This bill reduces double handling and needless duplication across the government. It will

clarify public sector roles and responsibilities and it will ensure clear governance by streamlining reporting requirements. I listened to the Leader of the Opposition's contribution. She has stated publicly and also today that budget repair and reducing debt is her top priority. Yet here we have a bill proposing to do exactly that, and unfortunately she could not bring herself to say that she supports the bill – although interestingly enough the member for Hawthorn said that they support the bill. The lead speaker for the opposition said that they wanted to move some amendments. So what exactly does the Liberal Party think they stand for with the two-faced approach that they have, speaking about reducing waste and cutting costs while in the next breath not supporting an endeavour by the government to do so through this bill.

We are committed to ensuring that our public service is focused on the needs of Victorians, and we are building quality public schools – some at Thornhill Park, to remind the member for Hawthorn. Just in the last two weeks I was out at the opening of the two newest schools in my electorate, and they are Kolorer College at Cobblebank and Murrum Primary School in Weir Views. They are just two of the schools. I did want to pick up on what the member for Tarneit was talking about in his contribution about school builds in his electorate and in my electorate. I think he said he has had seven schools built in seven years, and I know I have had five new schools in seven years. I have got to remind the opposition that out of the 100 new schools that the Andrews–Allan Labor governments have built, 30 per cent of those have been built in the western suburbs. Previously they have argued that we have neglected the west. This is only one example of what we have done, let alone the health facilities that we have built. I have just got to commend the member for Footscray on the build of the beautiful new Footscray Hospital, which is officially opening tomorrow. It is one of the most exciting infrastructure builds probably in this state but certainly in the western suburbs. Being a boy from the western suburbs and knowing the old Footscray Hospital, it is a joy to actually go through that new hospital complex but also just to drive past. The excitement in the western suburbs is palpable about that new hospital. I thank the member for Footscray for her advocacy. It is just an amazing outcome.

Some of the other things that we have done in regard to cost of living include another great initiative: the free public transport for under-18s and the free public transport for seniors on weekends. These are just some of the things that our government is committed to in regard to improving the lives of Victorians. Those opposite have so far announced at least $11.1 billion in unfunded commitments: freezing government fees, changes to stamp duty for first home buyers, repealing the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund, abolishing the short-stay accommodation levy and introducing a payroll exemption for high-fee non-government schools. But let us make it clear: we are doing this in line with the Silver review, and many contributors have referred to that. We are not cutting frontline services. We are totally committed to our frontline services, and we are not like the opposition; we will never cut frontline services. I know from being the previous secretary of the ambulance union the battles that we have had with conservative governments in past years in regard to cutting frontline service, and my industry, the ambulance industry, was heavily reduced by their efforts. We are not closing schools, we are not closing hospitals and we are not privatising essential services; again, the opposition did that some years ago, in particular in the communications centre for the ambulance service.

The changes proposed by this bill are sensible, and they support the government's plan for responsible fiscal management without frontline cuts that hurt Victorians and their families. We are doing precisely the opposite. Compared to 2019 – and I know these figures have been referred to, I think by the member for Eureka – there are an extra 671 police and protective services officers; that is an increase of 4.1 per cent. There are an extra 3819 teachers in our government school system, and that is an increase of 9 per cent. There are an extra 10,282 nurses and midwives, and that is an increase of around about 30 per cent. All of these additional people that have been employed are servicing the Victorian community, and we thank them for their services in protecting, teaching and looking after the health and welfare of all Victorians. We really thank them. As mentioned, these are sensible measures designed to implement budget savings and reduce the duplication of work across government. We are looking to make the work of government more efficient without cutting and

hurting, as I have said, our frontline services – unlike those opposite, who would do so if they were to ever get back into government.

We are integrating Recycling Victoria into the EPA, which consolidates their functions under a single primary regulator and program interface instead of dispersing regulatory oversight across multiple separate bodies. Victorians expect and deserve a system that is streamlined and is accountable and is efficient, and these reforms deliver exactly that. By reducing the number of regulators and eliminating fragmentation we are creating a clearer, stronger governance structure and making targeted, responsible changes where necessary to reinforce the capabilities. It sharpens the oversight and strengthens the integrity of these bodies and their processes.

The transition of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's statewide environmental assessment and advisory scope into the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability will be supported by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, and that just makes sense; it creates a clearer, more integrated model for environmental reporting and assessment, and that is headed by the same commissioner. Over time we have seen the creation of multiple advisory bodies to provide environmental assessments, which have ultimately led to a duplication and some confusion at times about who is actually responsible for what – sometimes a passing of the football about, 'It's not ours, it's yours,' and again you get that situation when there are multiple agencies involved, so this is about streamlining that.

Victoria's environmental and renewable energy ambition is not rhetorical. It is deliberate, it is coordinated and it is decisive, and on our side of the house we recognise that as climate change accelerates and extreme weather events become more frequent and severe across our state, incremental change is not enough. We need to – we must – act with purpose, and we certainly are. We have seen those environment changes even this summer, and we have seen the disaster of some of the fires and the floods this summer. In some locations they have had both fire and floods and the trauma that comes with them. We are very fortunate with the floods that there were no lives lost, but unfortunately we lost a life in one of the fires at Longwood.

We are delivering the Melbourne renewable energy hub near my electorate of Melton, which will power up to 200,000 houses during peak periods. I went out to that hub some time ago. It is out at Plumpton, and it is amazing. We took one of our specialist school groups out there and showed them around. It is an incredible facility. These are the types of things that our government has invested in, and that will deliver, as I say, power to around 200,000 homes during peak periods.

This is a really important bill, and I am pleased that it has been brought forward this week into the house. I have heard all of the contributions. As I say, we are worried about the $11.1 billion in cuts that the opposition would make. I commend this bill to the house.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (18:41): I rise to give a contribution on the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025. As the member for Melton said, there has been some good listening, listening to both sides of the chamber and hearing how different people take what this bill is trying to achieve. In my former life as a small business owner we always had to do some checks and balances on our budget; we used to have to make sure that we ran to a budget. So it is not surprising when we see the state of finances in Victoria that some hard decisions do have to be made.

This bill amends several pieces of legislation to implement part of the government's response to the independent review of the Victorian public service, which most people, as they have said today, know as the Silver review. I know I have got meetings coming up. I am not sure if it is a coincidence that people are coming into the office to talk about the impact of the Silver review. I am thinking they are not going to be too complimentary, because some of these changes may be where they are also. Specifically, the bill seeks to give effect to elements of the government's response to the Silver review's recommendations by abolishing and reforming and consolidating a number of public entities

and boards. As I said, when you are trying to balance the books, you do need to make some tough decisions. A couple of the concerns that I know a few of my regional colleagues have are especially around the mental health side of things.

I also see it daily on the streets of the Latrobe Valley and I am sure, Acting Speaker Mullahy, as you wander around your electorate you see the prevalence of mental health patients among people that are on your streets. It is something that I think affects every electorate, and we see it a lot in our community. Stripping away access and taking away some powers from the mental health side of things and taking away what the member for Mildura said also out of the review that was done – it does not sit right. We need more help, especially down in regional Victoria. I know the girls in my office over the journey have had a lot of people come into the office – people that have mental health issues and also their family members who are trying to help them and protect them. The issue that we do have is not having enough mental health facilities for these people to go and use and be assessed in, and that does put stress on that family unit. As a few members have said, they have sat in rooms in tears with those families, because we are their last resort. They have tried every place and everywhere else to get some help and they end up on our doorstep.

Some of the people are frequent flyers; sometimes they just want to come in and touch base because they have made that connection but are too ill and unwell to actually make it into the office for the girls to help out where they can and we end up having to call our wonderful emergency services to go and do a welfare check on these particular individuals. In stripping back some of the powers which were recommended in the royal commission review when it looked into mental health, it really puts pressure and focuses right on regional Victoria.

Our hospital, Latrobe Regional Health, which does an amazing job, is overwhelmed with these people coming through the doors of the ED, whether they are presenting themselves, whether family members are trying to get them in to have an assessment or whether it is the police or our ambos that are bringing them to the hospital for help. Sometimes they are there for up to 24 hours because we just do not have the beds in regional Victoria to help in that situation. We make contact with other hospitals and other facilities in metropolitan Melbourne, and if there is nowhere to go, there is just nowhere to go. So that is one of the real concerns that I do have on the mental health side of things.

As I said, this bill undermines and narrows the role of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, including in data collection, system oversight and information sharing, and will invert its relationship with the government. It winds back key recommendations, as I have said before, of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. So now it is prevalent and at the forefront of not only my mind but also my staff's minds that when we are getting up and talking on bills and highlighting the issues in not only my area in the Latrobe Valley but into East Gippsland and right around regional Victoria, we need to be highlighting this all the time, as much as we can, because there is more that needs to be done. If we are looking at narrowing that focus, I just hope that we are not taking a step in the wrong direction and an unintended consequence will happen down the track. So we need to make sure that we are working hard in that space.

Our suicide rates in regional Victoria are high, and it affects everybody when someone does lose their life by self-harming and succumbing to suicide. I know our sporting fraternity, my football club, the Traralgon Football Netball Club, where I spent all my youth growing up playing football, has been touched by this several times. Young men who you think have not got a care in the world, who are big, strong lads and love playing football and are always at the forefront of having a good time, have succumbed to mental health issues. The Moe football club have done a lot of work in that space as well, unfortunately. I say 'unfortunately' because two footballers have lost their lives. We actually play for a cup because of issues that have happened inside the Moe football club, with someone losing their life to poor mental health, and inside the Traralgon Football Netball Club.

There are good bits and pieces in this legislation, but I am very hesitant about winding back recommendations from the royal commission on what we should be achieving as a minimum standard. I just hope that we get it right. Well, I do not hope we get it right; we need to get it right.

I have heard people talk about schools – new schools being built and so forth – and then on our side about schools in regional Victoria. We do get the occasional new school or new wing being built, but we also have schools that are falling down. I listened to the member for Hawthorn before, and he was talking about hospitals raising money to actually look after their space. We also have that with schools around our area as well having to raise money for basic needs. When we do have to look after the budget, these things do need to happen, but we need to make sure they are happening for the right reason, because normally it is because we have overspent. You have overspent your budget. You have not taken in all the economic factors around the place and you find that you are a long way in debt. The people of Victoria are the ones that have to carry that debt and have to carry those repayments of interest with their taxes and so forth. I hope that we can work very hard in that mental health space and make sure we get it right.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (18:51): I rise to speak on the Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025, and I rise to speak in support of this bill. Where the member for Morwell finished off, I think, was a really important point, which is about funding mental health across our communities. I do take his point very seriously, particularly around his local footy club, and acknowledge how difficult that would have been for him and the community in particular at that time. Thank you for sharing that with the house.

There are things that I will disagree with the member for Morwell around, but I will come back to that in a moment. One of the great honours of being a representative of communities like mine is the diversity of it. The Point Cook electorate, and the suburb of Point Cook in particular, is the most diverse community in the country. That is not me saying it, because many other members will try and make that claim. I know the member for Laverton will try and make that claim. The member for Clarinda will try and make that claim. The member for Cranbourne will try and make that claim. But they are all wrong, because the Australian Bureau of Statistics says that Point Cook is the most diverse community in the country. You can complain all you like and you can try and bring points of order and all such matters, but facts are facts. We have got to look to the appropriate umpire on these things.

The reason I mentioned that Point Cook is such a wonderful community is because of the people in the community of Point Cook, and it is an honour to have here with me today some of those people from Point Cook, from the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard down in Werribee South. It is brilliant to have Joe Gatty, Regan Connally, Alison Badgery, Robert Bradley, Edel Doyle, Christopher Bie and also Ananya Singh join us today. I should say that I first met the coastguard in Werribee South when Tim Pallas covered the area. Tim Pallas obviously covered Werribee South before the redistribution, and he was kind enough to invite me along to the opening of the shed down in Werribee South, just off the football oval there. That was, I think, a long time in coming in terms of government investment. I was very proud to just very recently announce that we were getting another vehicle for the coastguard down in Werribee South.

One of the things that I just think is so wonderful about the volunteerism and effort – and I want to acknowledge that volunteerism and effort – is how it keeps our community safer. When we talk about how we spend our money in this state – and this bill is fundamentally about how we spend our money and the choices we make – the coastguard made some choices this evening on whether they would be on the fun tour or the boring tour. When you make choices about your funding, funding the coastguard is a very good set of funding to make. It is an excellent set of funding to make. I recently went out on the boat in Port Phillip Bay with them, and that is an extraordinary piece of kit. I am very thankful for being able to participate in that, but I want to thank them for all their work because I know they have had a number of rescues over the summer and continue to keep the community safe. So I just wanted to acknowledge them on the way through.

In Point Cook we are actually quite unique because we have, I think, all the emergency services that the state has to offer. We have opened a new SES facility with the largest SES type of shed, and that was opened just two years ago. I know that government support for that has been incredibly significant, including from the Treasurer, who has brought forward this bill to make sure that we have the trucks, the trailers and the support equipment inside that facility. They already have as many volunteers as they can take for the moment, and they keep training more. We also have a police station on the way down in Point Cook, on Point Cook Homestead Road, and I think many members of the community are looking forward to seeing that facility open. It is at the opposite end of the electorate from the Werribee police station, which is the largest police station in Victoria outside of the CBD, something that really helps us with community safety across our community. We also have an ambulance station, a fire station and a CFA. The Minister for Police has just entered the chamber, and I am so glad. I will be looking forward to a little bit of a progress update. The walls are going up at the police station, and it is terrific that that is occurring.

We actually have all those facilities across our community, and they have all been delivered in the last three decades. Three decades ago the suburb of Point Cook had just 50 people – 50 people outside of the RAAF base – and it has grown over that time by 70,000 people, and every piece of infrastructure that we have seen delivered there has been delivered by a Labor government. When you make choices about how you spend your money, you spend it on the volunteers, the emergency services – those people who are going to support the community and look after it in circumstances where there are real challenges.

I acknowledged last week in this Parliament the CFA in Point Cook and the extraordinary effort that they have made over the summer bushfires. Tomorrow morning I will get to acknowledge the SES, who are also out there. I will also get to acknowledge the Sikh community who are out there providing meals and services and all the other volunteers who are out on the firegrounds over this summer. We have a real level of volunteerism in our community which goes to the heart of what makes us great, in being not only a diverse community but a community which is willing to put in. For anyone who wants to join the coastguard – if I do put this speech up online, which would be an amazing thing to do – I will make sure that I put the volunteer coordinator's details in there as well. I look forward to doing that.

I will come back a little bit to the bill now, because I think it is important to do so. I just acknowledge on the way through the wonderful work that the Treasurer's office and all the team there have done on this as well as the department. Of course this bill is related to the Silver review, and it addresses seven recommendations of the Silver review. The government response was delivered on 4 December.

I want to talk a little bit about Recycling Victoria and the integration that is occurring from Recycling Victoria into the Environment Protection Authority Victoria as well as the functions, people and assets that will be transferred into the EPA to create a single, stronger and clearer regulator for waste and recycling in this state. It also means that there will be less duplication and a greater understanding of the functions and who to go to should you have an issue around recycling. I do want to just say that it is wonderful that we got our green bins across our community recently, and they are being well used already in Werribee South. They may have even got them down there at the coastguard. I hope they have; maybe not. I am getting shakes. I was telling the coastguard just earlier – and I think I will have a moment to speak on this – that the last time that I spent outside of the chamber was on something that the government has delivered this week, which is a decision by this government to place more houses into those communities that can sustain more houses. The member for Caulfield took some particular umbrage with that at the time – placing thousands of homes in the community that he represents. Communities like ours have taken their fair share. They have put tens of thousands of people in communities like ours, and we are happy to have such a wonderful diverse community, but we want some fairness across the whole state of Victoria. Deputy Speaker, I know you are watching the clock intently, so I might just say that I do support this bill and I commend it to the house.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Sale police station

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (19:00): (1519) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Finance, and I am not sure whether it is also for his role as Minister for Government Services. The action I seek is for the minister to finalise at long last, after 11 years, the sale of the old Sale police station. Indeed the minister at the table, the Minister for Police, could also almost get this, because I understand the old Sale police station is still under the purview of Victoria Police. But that may not last long because, as the minister is aware from my own information to him, the old Sale police station was burnt down last Thursday, and that was a particular concern. It has been an eyesore for a long time, and unfortunately it was set on fire and a significant fire affected that particular site. There were 70-odd firefighters and around 20 appliances there from all around Gippsland to assist with the fire. We now have a burnt-out shell of a former police station. I believe that the Wellington shire has in fact issued an edict that it must now be knocked down, I think, within 15 days, Minister, so I hope VicPol is getting on to it to actually make sure that happens. The last thing we want after having this site sit there idle for 11 years is for it to sit there idle as a burnt-out shell. I know the member for Mildura knows about burnt-out shells being an issue in Robinvale.

However, the issue now is to get this site sold. The new Sale police station was opened in 2015, funded by the Nationals in government. We have been agitating for a long time to get this site, which has been declared surplus to requirements, sold off. I understand and I appreciate that there have been native title issues, that there has been a need to get the agreement of the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, but how long can this process take? It has been 11 years now, and the government still has not been able to address it. I have been raising this, and I have had local residents, I have had the neighbours and I have had the Wellington shire agitating for this to be addressed, partly because it became a site for antisocial behaviour. There was criminal activity occurring there, and it has been an eyesore for the community. It is a wonderful site, close to the centre of town, right on Lake Guthridge, perfect for a hotel, restaurant or some sort of tourism attraction, and it is being wasted. It does need to be actioned, and the Minister for Government Services and Minister for Finance is aware of this issue. I urge him to now act to make sure we bring this to a conclusion and make sure that we actually do something with this site, which has been sitting there for too long.

Keysborough Gardens Primary School

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (19:03): (1520) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Education and Deputy Premier, and the action I seek is for the minister to update my community on the progress of building works at Keysborough Gardens Primary School. As you know, this government invests significantly in the education outcomes of our students, and it was a Labor government that delivered the new Keysborough Gardens Primary School in 2020, an amazing school community in the growth area of Greater Dandenong council, to the south of that municipality. I have the great honour to be representing that community, which is absolutely thriving. It is one of the best places in the south-east you could ever raise your family in or consider moving into. We have seen that school, Keysborough Gardens Primary School, thrive under the incredible leadership of principal Sherri Jenkins, who is one of the best leaders, who has a great team around her. The teachers and education support staff do such an amazing job.

We came together a few years ago with a plan to deliver stage 2 of works at Keysborough Gardens Primary School, and the classroom buildings that have opened up there look amazing and have been transformed. But we know the education behind that – the mentoring, the support, the care and compassion that is provided by those education leaders – is setting our kids up for the future. Every time I go through Keysborough Gardens Primary School I feel that vibe. I feel the connection, the care

and the passion of those leaders. But I see it in the kids, who grow and develop so much over that time. When you stand there with student leaders who you might have seen a few years ago when they were younger, going through their preppy years, you can see the transformation that happens under that guidance.

You might ask what else is going on in Keysborough South. Well, there is a lot going on. The Keysborough Community Hub is an outstanding place for maternal and child health and kinder placements. There are great play and open spaces, a range of services and a leading library in the south-east that is a great feature each and every day. To see that in partnership with this Labor government and to see this Labor government deliver Keysborough Gardens Primary, you can see that for the Keysborough South and Keysborough communities we are on their side. We are supporting the education of our kids coming through kindy with this brand new hub in partnership with Greater Dandenong council.

We have delivered the Keysborough Gardens Primary School. We have built that school and then delivered the stage 2 works. People choose to move into this area because they see what it means to have the 20 per cent open space that is delivered as part of that community. It is a real privilege and honour to represent Keysborough South as part of the Mordialloc electorate, to see Keysborough Gardens going from strength to strength and to see the Keysborough Community Hub – only delivered by a Labor government – and I cannot wait for an update from the Deputy Premier and education minister on how we are tracking to that official opening.

Construction industry

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (19:06): (1521) My adjournment matter is for the Attorney-General, and the action I seek is for her to establish a royal commission into the CFMEU's corruption. The people of Victoria work hard. They pay their taxes, and they expect their money to be spent wisely, not poured into the pockets of criminals and gangland figures in the worst corruption scandal in the history of Victoria.

An independent corruption report has exposed that this government's brazen corruption has cost Victorians a staggering, eye-watering $15 billion. That equates to a $5000 corruption tax paid by every single household in this state, all while there is a cost-of-living crisis and when we know that families are saving every dollar that they can, when they know that every single dollar counts, when households are making decisions about whether or not they can even afford to buy insurance this year, when they are trying to buy things on special when they go to the grocery store just to make that budget stretch a little bit further and when they choose not to turn on the aircon on a hot day just to keep their power bills down. These are the everyday decisions Victorians are making because we are in a cost-of-living crisis, and they know that every dollar counts.

But this is not the case for the Allan Labor government, who recklessly waste money that is not theirs to line the pockets of criminals and crooks. How is that – the Labor government is using taxpayers money to fund crime and criminal activity in our state. This same corruption report exposes how government worksites were turned into drug distribution dens. It details the employment of a convicted killer as a health and safety worker. It details state-funded strippers being paid to entertain onsite; extortion, bribery and corruption galore; and women being forced to perform sex acts to get a job onsite. It also talks about gangland figures driving around in Ferraris and Lamborghinis that the Victorian taxpayer paid for. This is corruption that belongs in a Third World country, not here in our great state of Victoria.

The corruption expert that investigated all this said that he has ample evidence that the Premier knew exactly what was happening and looked the other way. In any other time in history, if this happened in any place in Australia, the Premier would apologise, would show remorse and would step down – but not here under the corrupt and rotten Allan Labor government. Victorians deserve a royal commission, and I call on the Attorney-General to establish a royal commission now. Tell us where that $15 billion has gone and give Victorians the answers they deserve.

Service Victoria

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (19:09): (1522) My adjournment is for the Minister for Government Services, and the action I seek tonight is that the minister update me on how our government's Service Victoria app is saving folks in Melbourne's west time and money. There are a lot of folks out there that may not realise how useful this app really is. In reality more than 170 different Victorian government services are now available in just this one app, from licences to concessions, all at the tip of your fingers. The most popular of these, I am sure, is the digital drivers licence, which is now live for all Victorians. It is a secure, convenient way to provide ID that is already accepted at venues and ID checkpoints. Folks can also have digital copies of their veterans cards, ambulance membership, even things like working with children checks.

Just last week we announced that folks in my community in Wyndham – this is just so good – can take part in a trial of digital birth certificates, giving parents fast, secure access to their kids' birth certificates on their phones. This is going to make kinder enrolment so much easier because parents can just add their child's birth certificate to their Service Victoria wallet next to their digital drivers licence, and they can show it with a quick scan. Whilst physical copies, yes people, still remain available, the digital versions mean that you have one less document to lose when you really need to have it handy, and it is all part of our broader digital – I cannot even say it this late at night. We are modernising our state services so people spend less time waiting and more time living. It is a big win for busy families in Melbourne's west because it means less paperwork, less hassle and more certainty.

Country Fire Authority Muckatah brigade

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (19:11): (1523) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Emergency Services, and I seek the minister to act immediately to ensure the Muckatah CFA truck is returned to the local Muckatah station as soon as possible. As I spoke about in this place during the bushfires condolence motion recently, Muckatah lost their truck for mechanical reasons back in October. But here we are in February and that truck still has not been returned. This followed two other trucks, the Cobram and the Tocumwal trucks, which turned into a burnover and would have been quite disastrous for them had they been with them. They are in a 30-year-old truck now, just while they are waiting for their truck to be returned, and it is really important that we get that back online as soon as possible.

Summer is not over, Deputy Speaker, as you well know. It is a total fire ban up our way today. Thursday is 37, Friday is 39 and Saturday is 37 again, so we have still got a lot of summer to come, and I think it is really important that the minister understand that getting our appliances back on board as quickly as possible is really, really important. We had over 30 appliances at the fire in Muckatah, which is between Cobram and Katamatite, and we lost 12 houses down there. It was a disastrous day, a tough day for the community, and we just want to ensure that we get our appliances back as soon as possible to make sure that they are ready to go for the next call-out when that comes, because, as we know, there could be plenty of call-outs still to come over the next couple of months. It is important that the minister understand that and get that back in shape for us as soon as possible.

Glen Waverley electorate Chinese community

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (19:12): (1524) My question is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Can the minister update the house on how the Allan Labor government continues to support Chinese Victorians, particularly those in my electorate of Glen Waverley? As we celebrate Chinese New Year, I want to wish everyone marking this important occasion a joyful and prosperous Year of the Horse. Glen Waverley is a proudly multicultural community. The Chinese community is not simply part of our district, it is woven deeply into its fabric. Through education, small business, professional services, community leadership and cultural life, Chinese Victorians are threads that strengthen and enrich the whole. That story resonates deeply with me. Like so many others, my family came to Victoria seeking opportunity and security for the next generation.

Ours is a state shaped by migration, strengthened by it and enriched by every culture that calls it home. Recently I was pleased to join the Premier at the Year of the Horse gala celebrations and to bring along representatives from local organisations and businesses who do extraordinary work strengthening community ties, supporting seniors, fostering trade and keeping cultural traditions alive. I want to acknowledge the Chinese Senior's Education & Skills Development Association, 3133 Good Neighbours group, Chinese Association of Monash, the Anhui Association of Victoria, Hunan Association Victoria, Australian Yunnan Society, Beijing Association of Victoria, Shanghai Jiao Tong University Alumni Association, Federation of Chinese Culinary Association, Chinese Photography Association of Victoria, Chinese Professionals Club of Victoria, Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce, Culinaria Cafe in Brentford Square, the Management Edge in Burwood, RLY Chinese Cultural and Language Academy, Bowei Technologies and Our Point 3.

These organisations represent only a fraction of the contributions Chinese Victorians make to our shared social, cultural and economic life. They build bridges between generations, between businesses and between nations. To the Chinese Victorians in Glen Waverley district and across our state, thank you for your leadership, your entrepreneurship, your community spirit and your generosity in sharing your traditions with us all. Xīn nián kuài lè dà jiā.

Data centres

Tim READ (Brunswick) (19:15): (1525) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for Climate Action. The action I seek is that the government ensure that the data centre boom in Victoria does not delay the transition from coal to renewable energy or inflate Victorians' power bills. AirTrunk, a self-described hyperscale data centre operator, has set up shop in Victoria. AirTrunk builds giant data centres with an unquenchable thirst for water and power. It is owned by Blackstone, a $1.2 trillion investment company, with a record of deforestation in the Amazon. AirTrunk's founder told *Forbes* magazine last year:

> The way I see AI, this is the biggest single biggest gold rush in human history. It's going to generate so much wealth for everyone.

But Victoria knows a thing or two about gold fever. The Victorian gold rush was a time of extraordinary wealth and rapid growth but also human folly and wild speculation. The Victorian government has gold fever anew and has declared its ambition to make our state the data centre capital of the country, luring big tech with a light-touch approach to regulation.

Data centres require enormous uninterrupted supplies of electricity and water, and data centre connection requests are surging in Victoria, driven in part by speculation. Even so, according to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, data centres could account for up to 11 per cent of Australia's total electricity consumption by 2035. Before we sell off the farm and sprint to the goldfields with pick in hand we need to ask: what is the cost? The Greens fear it will be Victorians and our climate that pay the price. A single 1-gigawatt data centre, like the one proposed for western Sydney, would use almost half the output of Victoria's Loy Yang A power station if running at full capacity, pumping out 6 million tonnes of carbon emissions each year. If you powered that data centre with solar, you would need a solar plant bigger than anything that currently exists in Australia. Rapid growth in data centres risks slowing Victoria's transition to clean energy by locking in higher overall electricity demand at a time when we need to shut down our dirty, ageing and unreliable coal-fired generators. The Clean Energy Finance Corporation warns that without additional renewable energy and storage to accommodate the AI data centre boom, wholesale electricity prices could rise by 23 per cent in Victoria by 2035. The government must act to prevent Victorian households and our climate from the avoidable financial and environmental damage wrought by AI data centre gold fever.

Gendered violence

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (19:17): (1526) My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence in the other place. The action I seek is for the minister to

visit Ballarat and provide my community with an update on the important work supported by the Allan Labor government to prevent gendered violence and disrespect towards women and girls before it begins. Family violence affects every part of our state. It occurs in metropolitan Melbourne, in the suburbs, in regional centres, in country towns and in rural communities across Victoria. My own community knows this too well. The violent events that occurred in early 2024 deeply impacted Ballarat. The murders of Rebecca Young and Hannah McGuire in Sebastopol in my electorate and the alleged murder of Samantha Murphy shocked us all. The community's grief was palpable, and our anger was undeniable. We sent out a clear message that violence against women must stop.

In response, the Premier came to Ballarat to announce $9.8 million over four years to deliver a nation-leading saturation model to prevent gendered violence in my community. Respect Ballarat represents a whole-of-community approach to building a city where everyone is respected, safe and free from violence. Co-designed with representatives from local organisations, Respect Ballarat will support initiatives in schools, sporting clubs, early childhood settings, workplaces and new parent programs to promote respect and equality. The four-year program brings together sports clubs, schools, emergency services, councils, health providers, community organisations and workplaces in a coordinated effort to prevent family and gendered violence. We will have a strong focus on engaging men, children and young people, new parents, and emerging leaders, building a network of community advocates who can help shift attitudes that drive violence. Respect Ballarat forms part of the government's $92.8 million strengthening women's safety package, which supports prevention, stronger justice responses and improved support for victim-survivors. I hope to welcome the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence to Ballarat and share with my community how Respect Ballarat is driving the change needed to prevent gendered violence.

Latrobe Regional Health

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (19:20): (1527) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Mental Health in the other place, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide urgent funding to expand the mental health unit at Latrobe Regional Health. Each day Latrobe Regional Health has an average of eight to 10 patients waiting in the emergency department for urgent mental health care because there are no beds available. LRH's 2024–25 annual report confirms only 38 per cent of mental health patients who presented to the ED were offered a bed within the clinically recommended eight hours, less than half the target of 80 per cent. With too few acute mental health beds, patients are left waiting 24 hours or more in the ED. This demand places significant pressure on the clinical teams. If they are unable to find a bed in the already stretched metropolitan network, then their only option is to discharge an equivalent number of patients from the Flynn unit simply to maintain bed flow. This continual turnover is forcing staff to prioritise bed availability over patient recovery.

No healthcare professional should be forced to choose between keeping a patient until they are well or discharging them early to accommodate the next person in distress. No modern mental health system should function this way. This is not a reflection of LRH's hardworking mental health professionals and management, who are doing their best in extremely difficult circumstances. It is the result of chronic underfunding and neglect by the Allan Labor government. Has the Allan Labor government not learned anything from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System?

As Gippsland's main acute mental health provider, LRH has just 23 low-dependency mental health beds and six high-dependency beds to service a population of close to 300,000 people. By comparison, Bendigo Health has 35 adult beds, which are part of a dedicated 80-bed mental health unit. This is woefully inadequate for us. My office has been inundated with families at their wits' end. Their loved ones are acutely unwell, yet unless they are deemed an imminent danger to themselves or others, they cannot be admitted, because there are simply not enough inpatient beds. Latrobe Valley residents deserve better. LRH cannot shoulder this burden alone. It needs an expansion of the mental health unit, and nothing less will allow people in crisis to receive the right care at the right time close to home. More acute mental health beds mean fewer people waiting 24 hours or longer in the ED during the

most vulnerable time of their life. Minister, will you fund the urgently needed expansion of the mental health unit at Latrobe Regional Health?

Westall shopping centre

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (19:23): (1528) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Small Business and Employment – she happens to be at the table – and the action I seek is for the minister to outline what programs the Allan Labor government is delivering to support local multicultural shopping hubs like Westall shopping centre in Clayton South in my electorate. The Westall shopping centre is a great local hub in our community. There are some fantastic local businesses operating there, and there is a great need to revitalise the shopping centre. I know local businesses and the local community more broadly want to see signage and amenity improvement and the revitalisation of the spaces connecting our community to the Westall precinct.

Minister, our community in the Clarinda district is a thriving multicultural community, and our small businesses are a huge part of that. We have worked to support our small businesses in the spaces where they operate. We saw that with the Springvale Boulevard revitalisation project, with the improved streetscapes and public artwork, improved pedestrian experience and safety, upgrading of paving and seating, improved lighting, better greenery with more shade trees and streetscape public art reflecting our diverse cultural community. I was very proud of the government investing $900,000 into that important project, helping to create new opportunities for people to connect and relax and for community celebration. The Allan Labor government's $17 million investment to support our multicultural traders and precincts shows how much our government values this community and the small businesses that provide important services to our community.

I thank the minister for her engagement with and support of the Springvale Asian Business Association, particularly around night trading at the Springvale shopping precinct in the next electorate but of course also Springvale's Lunar New Year celebrations, which were a huge success again this year. These are just a few examples of how the Allan Labor government is supporting multicultural small businesses in the Clarinda district and across the south-east. I look forward to working with the minister to extend that support to Westall shopping centre and the local business community around the Westall precinct. I thank the minister, and I am looking forward to her response.

Responses

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (19:25): The first item was from the Leader of the Nationals to the Minister for Finance, regarding a desire to see action to finalise the sale of the former Sale police station site. I did want to provide a couple of updates there, if I could, and I will refer those matters to the Minister for Finance. I know some of this will be relevant and well known to the member, but for the benefit of others in the house, the old Sale police station is a surplus Crown land property, and the government is working with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation regarding traditional owner interest in the Crown land, which the member for Gippsland South touched on. As a result of the fire, though, Victoria Police are currently working to assess the damage and status and condition of the building and establish perimeter fencing. That would be temporary, of course, to secure the site and assess the hazards of the site and ensure any hazards are managed, as while the site is surplus and is now the responsibility of other government departments for disposal in terms of its sale, Victoria Police still have a role in maintaining the physical buildings on the site. I can also add that – more as a reference point for the member – the minister in the other place, Minister Shing, the Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts, also has a role with regard to some of the work that is being undertaken with the Department of Transport and Planning in relation to this site. But I also have an interest in seeing the site disposed of to conclude Victoria Police's engagement in the site, and I will also encourage my colleagues to continue the work to move on this matter.

Further, the member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action he sought was that he update the community on the building works at Keysborough Gardens Primary

School, and I will pass that on. The member for Warrandyte raised a matter for the Attorney-General, seeking action to establish a royal commission. The member for Laverton raised a matter for the Minister for Government Services for an update on how the government services app is saving her people in the west many, many dollars. The member for Ovens Valley raised a matter for the Minister for Emergency Services, seeking action to ensure that the Muckatah CFA truck is returned as soon as possible. The member for Glen Waverley raised a matter for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs in the other place for an update on the support that is being provided to Chinese Victorians, particularly in his electorate of Glen Waverley, in relation to the multicultural portfolio supports that I know he works closely with her in the provision of. Certainly, as the Minister for Racing in the Year of the Horse, I know we had a significant event out there at Caulfield today with the consul general from China – a lot happening in that space throughout the year, I am sure.

The member for Brunswick raised a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for Climate Action particularly with regard to action on ensuring that the boom in data centres does not delay the energy transition from coal and on the significant water use and sustainability issues that the growth in data centres and potential opportunity bring. I will be sure to pass on more eloquently the requests and actions that he has sought. The member for Wendouree raised a matter for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence to visit her great city of Ballarat to update the local community on gendered violence and the education and actions that can be taken before those dangers become more real, as she is well aware of in her community, and to make sure that education and advice and supports are provided. The member for Morwell raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health, also in the other place, for action on urgent funding for the Latrobe Regional Hospital with regard to mental health care supports. The member for Clarinda raised a matter for my good colleague, the Minister for Small Business and Employment, and the action that he sought was an update on what other supports are being provided to multicultural shopping hubs in his electorate, particularly in the Clayton South area. I will be sure to pass on that matter from the member. That concludes the action items, Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Correct weight from the Minister for Racing, and the house stands adjourned till tomorrow morning.

House adjourned 7:30 pm.