PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2021

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry

Premier	The Hon. DM Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Mental Health	The Hon. JA Merlino, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J Symes, MLC
Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop	The Hon. JM Allan, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Higher Education	The Hon. GA Tierney, MLC
Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. TH Pallas, MP
Minister for Child Protection and Family Services and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers	The Hon. AR Carbines, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads and Road Safety	The Hon. BA Carroll, MP
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Solar Homes	The Hon. L D'Ambrosio, MP
Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services and Minister for Equality	The Hon. MP Foley, MP
Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and Minister for Fishing and Boating	The Hon. MM Horne, MP
Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Victim Support	The Hon. NM Hutchins, MP
Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development and Minister for Veterans	The Hon. SL Leane, MLC
Minister for Water and Minister for Police	The Hon. LM Neville, MP
Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Trade, Minister for Business Precincts, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, and Minister for Racing	The Hon. MP Pakula, MP
Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. DJ Pearson, MP
Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business and Minister for Resources	The Hon. JL Pulford, MLC
Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Community Sport and Minister for Youth	The Hon. RL Spence, MP
Minister for Workplace Safety and Minister for Early Childhood	The Hon. I Stitt, MLC
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. M Thomas, MP
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	The Hon. G Williams, MP
Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing and Minister for Child Protection	The Hon. RW Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms S Kilkenny, MP

OFFICE-HOLDERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION

Speaker

The Hon. CW BROOKS

Deputy Speaker

Ms JM EDWARDS

Acting Speakers

Mr Blackwood, Ms Blandthorn, Mr J Bull, Ms Connolly, Ms Couzens, Ms Crugnale, Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Halfpenny, Ms Kilkenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Ms Settle, Ms Suleyman, Mr Taylor and Ms Ward

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

The Hon. DM ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

The Hon. JA MERLINO

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. MJ GUY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party

Mr DJ SOUTHWICK

Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. PL WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals

Ms SM RYAN

Leader of the House

Ms JM ALLAN

Manager of Opposition Business

Ms LE STALEY

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

Council: Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A Young

Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Mr P Lochert

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Ms Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Maas, Mr Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	McGhie, Mr Stephen John	Melton	ALP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Brayne, Mr Chris	Nepean	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Britnell, Ms Roma	South-West Coast	LP	Newbury, Mr James	Brighton	LP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Ind
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David	Gippsland South	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Pakula, Mr Martin Philip	Keysborough	ALP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Werribee	ALP
Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan	Niddrie	ALP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Cheeseman, Mr Darren Leicester	South Barwon	ALP	Read, Dr Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Connolly, Ms Sarah	Tarneit	ALP	Richards, Ms Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Couzens, Ms Christine Anne	Geelong	ALP	Richardson, Mr Timothy Noel	Mordialloc	ALP
Crugnale, Ms Jordan Alessandra	Bass	ALP	Riordan, Mr Richard Vincent	Polwarth	LP
Cupper, Ms Ali	Mildura	Ind	Rowswell, Mr Brad	Sandringham	LP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Ryan, Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen	Oakleigh	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Settle, Ms Michaela	Buninyong	ALP
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Fowles, Mr Will	Burwood	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Fregon, Mr Matt	Mount Waverley	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Staikos, Mr Nicholas	Bentleigh	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Bulleen	LP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hall, Ms Katie	Footscray	ALP	Tak, Mr Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
Halse, Mr Dustin	Ringwood	ALP	Taylor, Mr Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Hamer, Mr Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Theophanous, Ms Katerina	Northcote	ALP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Vallence, Ms Bridget	Evelyn	LP
Horne, Ms Melissa Margaret	Williamstown	ALP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Kennedy, Mr John Ormond	Hawthorn	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Labor Party; Greens—The Greens;
Ind—Independent; LP—Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals.

Legislative Assembly committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee
Ms Addison, Mr Blackwood, Ms Couzens, Mr Eren, Ms Ryan, Ms Theophanous and Mr Wakeling.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee
Ms Connolly, Mr Fowles, Ms Green, Mr Hamer, Mr McCurdy, Ms McLeish and Mr Morris.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee
Mr Angus, Mr Battin, Ms Couzens, Ms Kealy, Ms Settle, Ms Suleyman and Mr Tak.

Privileges Committee
Ms Allan, Mr Carroll, Ms Hennessy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Mr Pakula, Ms Ryan, Ms Staley and Mr Wells.

Standing Orders Committee
The Speaker, Ms Allan, Mr Cheeseman, Ms Edwards, Mr Fregon, Ms McLeish, Ms Sheed, Ms Staley and Mr Walsh.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee
Assembly: Ms Allan, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr Pakula, Mr R Smith, Mr Walsh and Mr Wells.
Council: Mr Bourman, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Ms Mikakos, Ms Symes and Ms Wooldridge.

Electoral Matters Committee
Assembly: Ms Hall, Dr Read and Mr Rowswell.
Council: Mr Erdogan, Mrs McArthur, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Ms Lovell, Mr Quilty and Mr Tarlamis.

House Committee
Assembly: The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr T Bull, Ms Crugnale, Ms Edwards, Mr Fregon, Ms Sandell and Ms Staley.
Council: The President (*ex officio*), Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Mr Leane, Ms Lovell and Ms Stitt.

Integrity and Oversight Committee
Assembly: Mr Halse, Mr Rowswell, Mr Taylor, Ms Ward and Mr Wells.
Council: Mr Grimley and Ms Shing.

Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee
Assembly: Mr J Bull, Ms Kealy, Mr Sheed, Ms Ward and Mr Wells.
Council: Mr Bourman, Ms Crozier, Mr Erdogan and Ms Shing.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Assembly: Ms Blandthorn, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr Newbury, Mr D O'Brien, Ms Richards and Mr Richardson.
Council: Mr Limbrick, Mrs McArthur and Ms Taylor.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee
Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly, Mr Morris and Ms Theophanous.
Council: Ms Patten and Ms Watt.

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Tuesday, 12 October 2021

The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 9.03 am and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The SPEAKER (09:03): We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future, and elders from other communities who may be here today.

Members

MINISTRY

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (09:03): I advise the house that there have been changes to the ministry, and I make the full list of ministerial appointments available to the house.

Bills

WINDFALL GAINS TAX AND STATE TAXATION AND OTHER ACTS FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Introduction and first reading

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (09:04): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to impose a windfall gains tax on the increase in the value of land resulting from a rezoning and amend the Duties Act 2000, the Essential Services Commission Act 2001, the Gambling Regulation Act 2003, the Land Tax Act 2005, the State Taxation and Mental Health Acts Amendment Act 2021, the Taxation Administration Act 1997, the Valuation of Land Act 1960, the Water Act 1989 and the Water Industry Act 1994 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (09:05): I ask the Treasurer for a brief explanation of his latest tax.

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (09:05): I am happy to give an explanation to the member. The bill seeks to introduce a windfall gains tax, which was announced in the 2020–21 budget and which applies to rezoning decisions that create a value uplift of more than $100 000. The bill also includes a range of other legislative changes, such as expanding the bill to rent concession; extending the point of consumption tax framework to keno, so that people cannot avoid the tax by paying online; and removing the land tax exemption for societies, clubs and associations from private gender-exclusive and gender-restrictive clubs.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

SEX WORK DECRIMINALISATION BILL 2021

Introduction and first reading

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (09:06): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to decriminalise sex work, to repeal the Sex Work Act 1994, to provide for a new protected attribute in the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, to make consequential and related amendments to other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (09:06): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (09:06): The Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill recognises that sex work is a legitimate form of work. The bill will support sex workers' safety and rights and ensure that sex work is safe work. The main objective of the bill is to repeal the Sex Work Act 1994 to decriminalise consensual sex work between adults, abolish the licensing system and regulate sex work business through the mainstream regulator in its place, such as WorkSafe, the Department of Health, Victoria Police and local governments.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

VICTORIAN COLLABORATIVE CENTRE FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING BILL 2021

Introduction and first reading

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (09:07): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to establish the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing, to make consequential amendments to other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (09:08): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (09:08): This is an exciting piece of legislation and one of the key recommendations of the interim report of the royal commission, the establishment of the collaborative centre. This bill will set out the centre's key functions and objectives and prescribe a small number of key activities as provided for by the royal commission into Victoria's mental health and wellbeing, so this is the architecture, the establishment and structure of the entity. The collaborative centre will provide for world-leading translational research, workforce development and best practice mental health and wellbeing care, delivered in collaboration with people with a lived experience of mental illness. The royal commission recommended establishment of the centre as part of its interim report in November 2019, primarily to address a gap in translational research capacity and to act as a centre hub, a centre of best practice for mental health research in Victoria. So I am very pleased to introduce this bill.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR BILL 2021

Introduction and first reading

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (09:09): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to establish the Office of the Special Investigator to investigate potential criminal conduct and breaches of discipline relating to the recruitment, management and use by Victoria Police of Nicola Maree Gobbo as a human source, to amend certain other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (09:09): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (09:09): What the bill will do is deliver on recommendations 1, 3, 92–99, 101 and 103 of the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants. It will establish the Office of the Special Investigator, known as the OSI, as an independent statutory office, a new investigative body with responsibility for investigating possible criminal conduct or breaches of discipline connected with Victoria Police's use of Ms Nicola Gobbo as a human resource. And it will also provide for the appointment of a special investigator and the functions, powers and duties of the OSI.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice given.

Petitions

Following petition presented to house by Deputy Clerk:

MOBILE PHONE TOWERS

The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly yet another suburban community which neither welcomes, nor rejoices a new mobile phone tower in their midst. We're NOT against technological progress!

However, we cite credible sources of science which continue to associate health dangers with high frequency, non-ionising electromagnetic (EM) energy sources like mobile phone towers and wireless technology including mobile phones.

Residents with vulnerable young children and elderly parents are being left with little choice but to continue receiving ever increasing microwave / radio frequency EM radiation.

Specifically, this "new-for-old" Greensborough tower replacement is definitely not a "like-for-like" straight swap either. The current tower slated for replacement is screened by vegetation and consistent with surrounding tree canopies. It's distant from housing and sits adjacent to the Metropolitan Ring Road.

Conversely, the proposed new tower brims with additional 5G & 4G panels and throws out significantly more EM radiation. It's much taller, more imposing, visually dominant and 55m closer to residential housing including a popular bike path.

Residents move to the area for the parklands and Green Wedge surrounds and these are diminished by such visually intrusive and arguably hazardous structures.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly call on the relevant ministries of Government to review the proposed erection of the mobile phone tower in Greensborough (RFNSA 3088012).

We request a reassessment of alternative site locations and seek relevant electromagnetic energy readings of the existing facility (RFNSA 308808) to compare the additional loadings imposed by the proposed new tower.

Full disclosure and communication is also sought with local residents, many of whom are excluded from the consultation process. At least one hundred affected residents received no information about this project.

Finally, we stand with Nillumbik Council in calling for more clarity on how the proposed tower successfully fits and integrates into the local neighbourhood character and existing visual amenity.

By Ms WARD (Eltham) (124 signatures).

Tabled.

The SPEAKER: I note that was the first e-petition presented to the Assembly.

Committees

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 13

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (09:15): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 13 of 2021, on the following bills and subordinate regulations:

Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Child Protection) Bill 2021

Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2021

Mental Health Amendment (Counsellors) Bill 2021

Suburban Rail Loop Bill 2021

SR No. 247—Environment Protection Regulations 2021

SR No. 92—Environment Protection Amendment (Wind Turbine Noise) Regulations 2021—Order to declare a class of entities as specified entities

together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

Documents

DOCUMENTS

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT—The Deputy Clerk tabled the following documents under Acts of Parliament:

Ombudsman—Investigation into allegations of collusion with property developers at Kingston City Council—Ordered to be published

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008—Report to Parliament on the Extension of the Declaration of the State of Emergency—19th Report

Statutory Rule 126 under the *Tobacco Act 1987*

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 126

Documents under s 16B in relation to—*Education and Training Reform Act 2006*—Ministerial Order No 1337—Order amending Ministerial Order No 615—Amendment to Order Fixing of Fees Administered by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority.

Bills

BUILDING AMENDMENT (REGISTRATION AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2021

SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP BILL 2021

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (09:17): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Building Amendment (Registration and Other Matters) Bill 2021 and the Suburban Rail Loop Bill 2021.

ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TREATMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Council's amendments

The SPEAKER (09:17): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Assisted Reproductive Treatment Amendment Bill 2021 with amendment.

Ordered that amendment be taken into consideration later this day.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS AMENDMENT (REUNITING PETS AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2021

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (INFORMATION SHARING) BILL 2021

Appropriation

The SPEAKER (09:17): I would like to inform the house that I have received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Domestic Animals Amendment (Reuniting Pets and Other Matters) Bill 2021 and the Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2021.

Committees

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Membership

The SPEAKER (09:18): I also wish to advise the house that I have received the resignation of Ms Vallence from the Environment and Planning Standing Committee effective from yesterday.

Motions

GENERAL BUSINESS

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (09:18): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

(1) notes that non-government business is an essential part of ensuring a responsible and representative Parliament in any Westminster system, and currently Victoria's Legislative Assembly is the only lower house in Australia that does not provide meaningful opportunities for non-government members to move motions or progress bills;

(2) resolves to replace matters of public importance and the grievance debate with 2 hours of non-government business every sitting Wednesday;

(3) refers the required amendments to standing orders to the Standing Orders Committee to report to the house by 16 November 2021; and

(4) adopts required changes to the standing orders by 30 November 2021.

Leave refused.

Business of the house

PROGRAM

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (09:19): 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 2.00 pm on Thursday, 14 October 2021:

Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Child Protection) Bill 2021

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021

Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2021

Terrorism (Community Protection) Amendment Bill 2021.

I only intend to make a few brief comments on the government business program that the government has moved this morning for the house's endorsement. I am hopeful that this will be a government business program that will be strongly supported because it is a strong government business program. It is further evidence that the government each and every week is bringing forward a suite of legislative reform that is designed to implement policy work, to implement election commitments and to build a stronger Victorian community. If you look at the policy areas that are canvassed in the government

business program this week, from education and health information to important work in child protection and also in community protection around terrorism, there is a lot to debate and a lot to consider over the course of this parliamentary week by members in this chamber. As I say, it is with optimism each and every week that I look forward to the house's support for and endorsement of the government business program.

For completeness, the government will move after the government business motion to the Assisted Reproductive Treatment Amendment Bill 2021 to deal with the amendments that have returned from the Legislative Council, which are reasonably straightforward. Then finally, as I have indicated to members across the chamber privately, on the COVID-19 vaccination requirements motion that I have just given notice of for debate later this week, it is the government's intention that this motion be debated on Thursday. It was decided it was an appropriate opportunity for members to have time to review the motion. I will not go into too much of the detail of the motion—that will be more for Thursday—other than to acknowledge there has been already a lot of discussion and work both across the chamber. I particularly acknowledge the Manager of Opposition Business for the work we have done over the past week and also across the Parliament with colleagues in the Legislative Council, and I would also like to acknowledge the support of the clerks.

Again, I do not want to stray too much into the detail of the motion other than to say I felt it was appropriate that members had a good couple of days to review the motion and to reflect on their own personal circumstances and how they may or may not comply with the requirements in the motion, because this is one of the more challenging motions, I think, that has come before the Parliament, because obviously, as the motion states, non-compliance results in suspension. That is not something that any chamber should take lightly, and that is why there is the opportunity over the next two days for colleagues to review it. And I would really encourage colleagues who do have any questions or issues to please seek out advice from the clerks, because this has been very carefully put together, carefully crafted, in order to address a number of issues but also to make it very clear that this is not to be precedent setting and that it is confined to the circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which obviously is continuing to affect our community as it is communities right around the world.

So that is the plan for Thursday. As I have said, the rest of the government business program is a strong one. I look forward to the strong debate and participation of colleagues on the agenda before the house, but right now I most look forward to this government business motion being supported. I commend the motion to the house.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (09:23): On this occasion the opposition will not be opposing the government business program. We understand that there are four bills on the program, as the Leader of the House has just explained. We also note that the house will be debating the motion that the Leader of the House has just given notice for. The Leader of the House has indicated that will be on Thursday, and I join in saying that this is a serious matter that we will be debating on Thursday. It is a difficult matter, not so much, could I say, in relation to supporting vaccination; I think there is strong support across the house for that. However, the consequences of this motion are significant. They are important, and it is of the utmost importance that we, to the greatest extent possible, corral what we are doing here to this specific instance of why we would take this action. And this does have consequences for how we look at the privileges of the house, how we look at the various constitutional mechanisms that are available to both the houses individually but also to external bodies. There are many deep issues in relation to the motion that will be moved on Thursday. I think it is appropriate that we take a couple of days from the time that members have first seen this motion to give everybody the opportunity to think and to ask the clerks—and I agree with the Leader of the House that the clerks have been of immense help and assistance in advising me as Manager of Opposition Business as to how various things can be done or not done, and I thank them for that specifically. They are always marvellous, but in relation to this they have been very, very helpful indeed. As I said, we will not be opposing the government business program, and we look forward to getting on with it.

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (09:25): I thank the member for Ripon, the Manager of Opposition Business, for her support of the government business program.

Ms Staley interjected.

Mr FOWLES: But it is such good fun, the government business program. Look, it is a very important government business program that the chamber is considering this week, and I did just want to make a couple of brief comments, particularly about the matter to which the Manager of Opposition Business refers. I concur: this is a very serious matter. It is a very, very substantial thing for any parliament to contemplate suspension of members from the chamber, and I am very pleased that we are having that debate this week. It is an important debate. It is a debate that I hope will be conducted with due deference to the science and the health advice and the very serious health circumstances we find ourselves in. So I am very pleased that that motion will form part of the debate this week. In addition to that of course we have four bills. We are getting on with the business of governing, as indeed we should, and I look forward to the week unfolding.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (09:27): As flagged by the Manager of Opposition Business, we will not be opposing the government business program today. There are of course the significant matters that we will be debating this week. The motion around mandatory vaccination is of great significance in potentially setting a precedent for how we as parliamentarians suspend members within this place. I certainly know that within my own electorate there has been a lot of discussion around mandatory vaccination as opposed to people who are anti-vaccination, but also there are people who can see that there may be other options that need to be investigated around mandatory vax. I do not think there are many people in the community or within this place who are opposed to vaccination. I think in fact many are fully vaxxed at this point in time. Many people have made that decision that they wish to equip their body in the best possible way to minimise the way that COVID will impact on them. And as parliamentarians we have a different job: we work within our communities, often with people who are immunocompromised or elderly, and therefore we have different responsibilities apart from just what we do and how we operate within this chamber. So I look forward to the motion that will be debated on Thursday. I am appreciative of the comments by the manager of government business around giving all members a couple of days notice to be able to get their thoughts together or get vaccinated if they choose to but also to be able to completely weigh up and do their research and talk to others around what their position should be on that very important motion for this chamber.

It is a disappointment that we did not see that same suitable length of time for the Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2021, which is also set down for this week. This is a significant bill, and there really was not a lot of information given during the bill briefing. We would have liked to be able to take this bill into consideration in detail. I would like to refer this bill to a committee, and I will give notice of such tomorrow—to the Legal and Social Issues Committee—to delve down into how this will actually operate and how it will work with other federal requirements around the My Health Record and also around mandated consent to release your health information to every single public health service in the state and for that information to be shared without an opt-in or opt-out opportunity. I would love for those matters to be discussed through a committee and for an inquiry to take place; however, we have not had that opportunity at this stage. So while the government business program is supported, we see some interesting issues that will come up during the week, and we look forward particularly to be able to debate the motion around mandatory vaccination.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TREATMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Council's amendments

Message from Council relating to following amendment considered:

Clause 5, page 5, line 3, omit "intersex status" and insert "sex characteristics".

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (09:30): I move:

That the amendment be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

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

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM AMENDMENT (SENIOR SECONDARY PATHWAYS REFORMS AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2021

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Mr MERLINO:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (09:31): I rise to lead the debate on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021, and I state at the outset that we are supporting this bill. I have shown a great interest in this. It is an exciting bill, but I think, given I am a parent of seven children, with my last going through school, I perhaps should declare a conflict of interest here that I am certainly looking at these sorts of pathways. You know, I did get deeply involved in this legislation, and I will thank a couple of people in a moment. But I should give a shout-out too to Ranges TEC and Ric Thorpe and all of the people out there—Ric is a director at Ranges TEC; I think he has been a director there since 2017—and MECS of course, Mount Evelyn Christian School. Ranges TEC is a campus of MECS, especially designed for that hands-on learning which gives pathways into trades, TAFE and all the wider workforce. I had the pleasure of visiting both MECS and Ranges TEC some time ago, and some of the work that they are doing there and the passion and dedication of those people there are truly things to be admired. I think they will watch this bill with interest and see how those changes transition into these new arrangements.

But before I begin, I do want to just start off a bit differently today. Before I get into the details of the bill, I want to commence with a couple of thankyous and in particular one to the parliamentary library information services. There are a number of people that I would like to put my thanks on record to in appreciation of those who have greatly assisted me to examine this bill, to consult widely and to form a view and a recommendation to support it. I think sometimes as members of this place we do not necessarily take for granted but we perhaps do not acknowledge the work that the parliamentary library information services do. We all know that when bills are introduced to the Parliament the library prepares info links with key resources for every bill. It is very useful. I have found it particularly useful with all the bills that I am responsible for as the Shadow Minister for Education, and particularly for this one. Members would be familiar that those info links have a copy of the bill, relevant legislation, related documents, any media in relation to the topic and organisations and websites. I do want to put on record my thanks to the parliamentary library for the research they did, because that information was valuable. I consulted and referred to it a number of times as I tried to get my head around the workings of this bill, and I very much appreciate all the work the library staff do in supporting members here from both sides of the house and from both chambers.

I should also put on record my thanks to the departmental reps. Fortunately I had a bit more time to actually prepare a bill briefing and to consult widely with stakeholders, and the department reps as

always were very giving of their time and advice in answering questions. We had a number of members from this side attend the bill briefing: Melina Bath, Matt Bach and Bev McArthur from the other place; and the member for Eildon and the member for South-West Coast from this house. I think we all appreciated the time that those departmental reps gave in answering the questions we asked as we wanted to analyse the bill and get into greater detail. Also just a shout-out again in appreciation to Paul Frame and Ben Craven from the minister's office who put together that bill briefing which enabled us to smoothly consider the bill, consult with stakeholders, have questions answered, consult widely and form a view and a position on the bill to come back through our party room processes and eventually arrive here today to debate this bill in the house. Thank you to Paul and thank you to Ben from the minister's office.

Just before I get into the details of the bill, there are a couple of reports that are highly relevant to this bill that I want to make mention of and quote a few things from to set the scene. This is a government document, but I think some of the comments in it are welcome. This is *Senior Secondary Pathways Reform Taskforce: Senior Secondary Reform Overview*. For any members that might want to make a contribution to this debate I highly recommend they have a look at these reports. They are full of information.

I think we all agree in this place that setting every Victorian student up for the future is something we all want to support. We want every Victorian senior secondary experience to be a positive one, an enjoyable one, a rewarding one. The report states:

> Senior secondary education is about developing and realising every student's potential. Our VCE is world class and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) has provided a steppingstone to great jobs in growing industries.

I will come back and touch on that a bit further in my contribution.

> We need to ensure students build the skills and capabilities to thrive in further education and training, move into a rewarding career and live a great life.
>
> Within senior secondary education, vocational and applied learning builds critical and creative thinking, communication skills, teamwork and collaboration, curiosity and innovation—

all great things.

> It provides students with real-world knowledge, including about the workplace and practical and transferable skills.

Just before entering the chamber I was fortunate to catch the Minister for Education in the hallway and talk about our position on this bill.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr HODGETT: No, we had a great conversation about the merits of this bill. Again, we are all supporting setting every Victorian up for the future. We all get this feedback. Whether it be university, whether it be high school or whether it be applied learning, a lot of people from business and industry talk about people being job ready and having the skills to come out of the learning environment and to apply those skills straightaway. We can always improve there and we can always get better at that. Feedback is consistent from industry and from the different work sectors about getting students job ready, where they can leave that learning environment and go straight into the applied learning. We are fully supportive of that.

We know from the background here that in 2019 the Victorian government commissioned John Firth, a former CEO of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, to conduct a review titled *Review into Vocational and Applied Learning Pathways in Senior Secondary Schooling*, which is known as the Firth review, and I will come back to that. The Firth review found that we need to do more to make vocational and applied learning in schools high quality, highly regarded, relevant to the needs of students and employers, and available to all. Again I emphasise we all want to see senior secondary students receive a great education, learn about the world of work and develop strong life

skills so they can make informed choices about further study, jobs and their futures. This will enable young people to contribute and benefit from the growth in the Victorian economy and prepare them for active and fulfilling lives within the community. Again I refer all members in this place to the senior secondary pathways reform task force report, particularly the sections that talk about excellent senior secondary education for all students, setting students up for the future and skills for the modern economy. It is a great document, and I recommend all those who have a keen interest in education outcomes have a read and familiarise themselves with this document.

At the very end of my contribution I will summarise the changes here in layman's terms so people can understand, but in this document on page 3 there is a very good time line from 2020 right through to 2025 when we have the introduction of a fully integrated senior secondary certificate. So for people that want to know how this will work and be implemented and transition over the next five years, that is an excellent part of that document, as is the section on supporting all students to stay engaged in education and training. We do not want people dropping out of the system because they have not got the right pathways to follow.

I had this discussion with a number of people. I am all for people doing maths/science courses. I am all for people pursuing VCE and getting an ATAR score. But we also recognise that not everyone wants to do that, and we want to keep students or support them in staying engaged in education and training. So it is important that we support all of them to be engaged in school and to accomplish their goals, and these sorts of pathways give students other options where they might not want to pursue the others for various reasons. The document also has a great section on providing students with the skills employees need. I did mention that, and I re-emphasise that. We hear this constantly about having people job ready, being able to apply their skills and learning as soon as they get into the workforce, and I think in lifting these standards and supporting this bill we have got the opportunity to see that delivered into the future.

There are a number of key recommendations in the report, but the main ones I think are about lifting the quality and consistency of vocational and applied learning for Victorian students. We are fully supportive of that. We want to see more efficient delivery so all students can access vocational and applied learning, and we want to see stronger support to schools reinforced by stronger accountability for delivery.

The other one I mentioned was the actual final report of the *Review into Vocational and Applied Learning Pathways in Senior Secondary Schooling*—again, a very interesting report to read. I think from memory there were something like 38 or so recommendations. I just want to put on record a quote from John Firth, who is the author of the report, because it sums up what all of us think about and support for our educators. In his message from the review, John Firth said:

> I was, yet again in my long experience in Victorian education, mightily impressed by the capacity of so many teachers, school leaders, support staff, VET trainers and others who work with young people in a wide variety of settings throughout the state.

And I am fully supportive of that. We owe a lot to our educators and the terrific work they do, the challenges they face, and I think John Firth in his report sums that up very well.

Having spent the first part of my contribution talking about those reports and thanking a few people, let us get to the details of the bill, make a few comments on the purpose, the main provisions and some areas we had a look at and just summarise why we are supporting the bill and then the framework for how this will be implemented. A key purpose of the bill is to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to introduce a new Victorian pathways certificate, the VPC, and vocational major within the Victorian certificate of education, the VCE, into Victoria's senior secondary education system. This new certificate framework will replace the Victorian certificate of applied learning—VCAL. The bill also amends the Education and Training Reform Act to enable the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) to extend the transition period of superseded training products beyond 12 months. The main purpose of the bill is to amend the Education and

Training Reform Act 2006. As is outlined in the bill, there is (a), (b), (c) and (d), and I will just put those on record:

> (a) to provide for new foundation secondary courses and foundation secondary qualifications …
>
> (b) to provide for transitional arrangements regarding the Victorian Pathways Certificate and the vocational major within the VCE …

the purpose of the bill is actually very simple and straightforward, but a large part of the bill is about all those transition arrangements, and that is the part that can be a bit difficult to get your head around, but I have confidence that that will be done right—

> (c) to enable the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority to extend the 12 month period regarding an RTO's management of the transition from superseded training packages; and
>
> (d) to provide VCAT with power to review a decision of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority to extend the 12 month period regarding an RTO's management of the transition from superseded training packages.

By way of background, and I have touched on it a little bit already, in November 2019 the Firth report was commissioned to make recommendations for review with two key aims: to ensure all Victorian secondary school students have access to high-quality vocational and applied learning options and to look to ways to improve transitions for students between school, post-secondary education and work. This review into vocational and applied learning pathways in senior secondary schooling was undertaken by the former CEO of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, John Firth—hence the Firth review, and I have made reference to that and encourage people to have a good look at that report. In November 2020 the Victorian government received the final report of the Firth review and accepted in principle all the recommendations of the review. The recommendations provide the framework for the senior secondary pathways reform agenda, which aims to improve the skills and work readiness of young people. Again we are back to that work readiness that we all know is so important so that people can get out and apply their learning, get into the jobs and not have to be re-taught or retrained on the work site.

The introduction of the new vocational major within the VCE and VPC will acquit recommendations 1 to 10 from the Firth review. Students will be able to enrol in a vocational major within the VCE from 2023, and this will replace the existing VCAL at the intermediate and senior levels as we move towards a single, integrated senior secondary certificate by 2025. I will come back to the timetable, but again, as I have mentioned, there is a good example of a timetable on the websites because people have a lot of interest in this and what is going to happen over 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2025 as we get there. Again for those who want to know how this will be implemented and transitioned, I encourage them to have a good look at that timetable.

I wanted to talk about the main provisions. There are a couple of things to get through here, but the bill sets out the details for the introduction of the new certificate framework. The bill inserts new definitions of 'VPC', 'foundation secondary course' and 'foundation secondary qualifications' to make provision for the VPC. The new definitions are consistent with the current definitions in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, but specifically this bill introduces new definitions of a foundation secondary course and foundation secondary qualifications to follow the Victorian pathways certificate, the VPC. It allows the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority, the VRQA, to register the VPC on the state register and register providers to deliver the course, and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the VCAA—lots of terms and acronyms in the department—to award the qualification. It enables the supported transition of providers and students to the new certificate scheme in time for it to commence in 2023 and creates offences for providing or offering to provide the new type of course or awarding or offering to award the new type of qualification without registration.

Again, just out of personal interest, that was an area we a had a bit of discussion on at the bill briefing. Fortunately I do not think there are many offences, or certainly the department reps could not alert us

to many offences there, but that provision is there in case it is needed. It allows the VRQA to extend the transition period of superseded training packages beyond 12 months where it is satisfied that there would be a disadvantage to students if the extension were not granted or where exceptional circumstances exist. Again, that is to do with those transitional arrangements in implementing these changes. It provides the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, VCAT, with the power to review a decision of the VRQA to extend the transition period of superseded training packages beyond 12 months. Finally, the bill amends the Education and Training Reform Act to give the VRQA power to extend the transition period for superseded courses beyond the current 12-month period, either on application or on the VRQA's own initiative. These powers are consistent with those of the Australian Skills Quality Authority and the Western Australian Training Accreditation Council and will ensure that students of VRQA-regulated registered training organisations are not unfairly disadvantaged relative to students of ASQA- and WATAC-regulated RTOs. I hope Hansard was able to get all that—the acronyms. Look, there are a lot of acronyms and things, but the bill explains all those and what they are. Again, it takes a bit of time just to get your head around how that will work.

There are a couple of areas that we examined in detail, that we had a closer look at and scrutinised. Questions were certainly raised about the preparation, the transition arrangements and the readiness of students to enrol in a vocational major within the VCE from 2023. We know that, particularly over the last couple of years under the disruptions of the coronavirus pandemic, a lot of schooling has been disrupted and students have had uncertainty and disruptions to their schooling, so we wanted to try to assure ourselves. I am sure they will be ready, but going forward how can there be some confidence and certainty that students will be able to enrol? 2023 is not that far away, so at the bill briefing we did ask some questions about that. At the bill briefing the department representative stated that there was still considerable work being undertaken in this area, as I expect there would be. Students, as I said, need the certainty, they need to have confidence in a smooth implementation and transition process. We will watch that with interest because we think these changes are terrific; they are great. They are going to support and lift the whole applied learning status, so we want them to work, and it will be really important over that time line, from now right through to 2025, that we get all this right.

The reforms also aim to improve the skills and work readiness of young people by lifting the quality and perception of vocational training outcomes, and we strongly support that. You know, people will have their own views on the value of ATAR and VCE and people choosing other pathways. I have got a diesel mechanic in the family, a carpenter and one still to head through the school pathways. They have had great pathways through; they got into trades and got really great careers and jobs. Other children have pursued the VCE option. So choice is valuable. We are fully supportive of these reforms that aim to improve the skills and work readiness of young people by lifting that quality and perception of vocational training. Anything we can do on this side of the house to support that we will get behind, because we think that is very, very important. We do know, however, that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We want to see this, how it is delivered and if it achieves all it is aiming to achieve. We will watch and see, but we are certainly supporting it.

As always with these things it is important to gauge the views of stakeholders, and we were able to do that. We have a long list of stakeholders in the education database that we write out to, and we appreciate their views. We ask for their views and opinions and we get feedback—not from all, but it is an important process when bills come to this house. We members do not have all the ideas or the thoughts on those. We like to get out and engage with the industry, engage with the education providers in the sector and engage with business and ask their opinions on this legislation. Pleasingly, we received no opposition to the bill from any of the stakeholders and, as I said, that is an important process for us to go through. That is why we are supporting the bill: for everything I have said in my contribution to this debate, for our engagement with stakeholders and for the importance we place on education and having options and choices and pathways for our students. The bill responds to the recommendations of a review where major stakeholders supported changes to improve the quality and consistency of vocational and applied learning for secondary school students. Again, as I said at the outset and I continue to say, we all want our schools to provide quality education and access to high-

quality programs, and we will always support that. We support senior secondary pathways that aim to improve the skills and work readiness of young people, therefore we are supporting a vocational pathway that provides students with the skills they need to progress on to further training and/or indeed jobs in the workforce.

I want to conclude by talking about both the time line and, in layman's terms, how this practically works. I do again thank Paul Frame. I had a look at this bill. We thought it might come on last sitting week and it did not, so it allowed us an extra week. But we sort of set it aside for that week, and so when I turned my attention back to it again, I was just getting my head around it and collecting my thoughts around how it would operate. I did touch base with Paul Frame yesterday, and Paul was terrific in getting me the information that was required. I do not think he has got carriage of this bill for the minister's office, but he was terrific in getting that back.

I did want to place on record how this will work so that people are clear in their minds about what the changes are and how they will be implemented. But first, if I can just touch on the time line. 2020, as I said, saw the release of the Firth review recommendations. 2021 saw the design and development of new certificates and curriculum. 2022 will see the release of final certificate designs and there will be a new curriculum in early 2022. 2023 will see the first enrolments in the vocational specialisation and foundation pathways certificate, and then as we get to 2025 all Victorian schools will deliver the fully integrated senior secondary certificate. It does sound like a long period of time but, as we all know, a few years will pass very quickly and, before you know it, it will be 2025 and these changes will be implemented.

To summarise, the VCE remains the name of the high school certificate. The new certificate framework includes two new senior secondary options. We have the Victorian pathway certificate—the VPC that I have been referring to—which is basically year 10 foundation level. Those that then go on will do the vocational major in the VCE. Some will opt just to complete the VPC, but that is that pathway, if you like. The VPC will replace foundation VCAL and is designed to support students to transition either to the VCE or to entry-level VET or employment. The VPC provides an additional pathway option for vulnerable students at risk of leaving education and students with additional needs.

Again I go back to the point I made earlier in my contribution: for people that do not want to pursue the VCE or a maths/science course or university for whatever reasons, rather than dropping out of the system, this gives them a strong pathway of options to follow. I talked about a few examples where people complete a level of school and go and join the family business or pursue other forms of employment that do not require the ATAR, do not require VCE and do not necessarily require some of those subjects, and I think we need to support those students to remain in and engage in the education system to deliver better outcomes and not necessarily drop off.

As I said, the VPC will replace the foundation VCAL and is designed to support students to transition either to the VCE or to entry-level VET or employment. The VPC provides an additional pathway option for vulnerable students at risk of leaving education and students with additional needs. The vocation major within the VCE is a new two-year vocational pathway program that will replace intermediate and senior VCAL and will be embedded in the VCE system.

In summary, or to finish my contribution, applied learning is valuable. We all know that. We all recognise that. We want to see the status, if you like, of applied learning. We are all for lifting that status and getting behind that. As I have continually said, not everyone wants to pursue a particular path, so this gives other options. The focus and emphasis here are very much on skills and work readiness, which we are supportive of, so the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021 is an important bill.

I finish by saying again that I have really enjoyed the process of reading the Firth report and the other document that I mentioned, with the support of the valuable information that the library were able to provide and given my own experiences with MECS, the Mount Evelyn Christian School, and with

Ranges TEC—and I mentioned Ric Thorpe and all the terrific work that he does there in Lilydale, in the member for Evelyn's electorate. I have visited there, and they do some terrific work. As these changes are implemented over the next few years and we transition into these new arrangements, I look forward to going back and visiting organisations like Ranges TEC and many, many others across Victoria and seeing the terrific outcomes that education pathways has provided in supporting our kids in education.

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (10:01): I too am pleased to rise and speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021 as we continue in our commitment to making Victoria the Education State and transforming Victoria's education system. I wish to thank the Minister for Education and the Minister for Training and Skills in the other place for the work that has gone into the development of this significant bill. Thank you to the hardworking ministerial officers, especially Alice Jordan-Baird and Liam Attoe, for the great job they do, as well as the Department of Education and Training for the work that has gone into the preparation of this bill.

I would like to thank the Minister for Education for the massive investment being made in schools across the electorate of Wendouree, including Ballarat High School, Ballarat Specialist School, Mount Rowan college, St Patrick's College and Delacombe, Forest Street, Black Hill, Alfredton, Macarthur Street, Newington, Dana Street and Caledonian primary schools. Across Ballarat we have so many excellent schools, and this is because of the outstanding leadership of our principals and the high-quality teachers and support staff—thank you for going above and beyond our expectations to keep our school communities connected and our students engaged during remote learning.

I would also like to just make quick mention of Alfredton Primary School and their community. It was required to close yesterday after someone with a positive case of COVID attended the school on Thursday. These are challenging times not only for our teachers and our students but for our broader school community. I hope that everyone at Alfredton Primary School is going well, and I wish them all the best for the remainder of term 4.

I am very pleased that the opposition is supporting this bill, and I thank the member for Croydon for his detailed explanation of the bill. Thank you very much for that. We know that Victoria's economy is rapidly changing and that many of the occupations that will be required in the future do not even exist yet. We need to futureproof our kids by ensuring students of today develop and build the skills and capabilities to fulfil the jobs of tomorrow. I want students to thrive in their learning environment so they can embrace education and training opportunities that will lead to fulfilling careers that they can enjoy and gain satisfaction from, and I am sure the member for Bayswater agrees with me very much.

Mr Taylor: Absolutely.

Ms ADDISON: Thank you. I believe the introduction of this bill will help facilitate this. Last year the Minister for Education announced that VCAL will be merged with the VCE. By introducing the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021 we are creating a single Victorian certificate of education, which will make it easier for students to get a range of skills, both vocational and academic. I welcome that senior school secondary providers and other education sector stakeholders, including the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, Independent Schools Victoria and the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, are supportive of the proposed senior secondary pathways reforms in this bill.

Senior secondary education is about developing and realising every student's potential, and our Victorian certificate of education, the VCE, is world class. The changes being proposed in this bill will ensure that students who are able to complete the VCE do so. I am showing my age, but I am proud to share that I was a member of the very first cohort to undertake and complete the VCE in 1992—and it has served me well to date. A number of changes have occurred since the origin, including the introduction of the Victorian certificate of applied learning in 2003 by Labor Minister for Education

and Training Lynne Kosky. Lynne considered the introduction of VCAL as one of her greatest achievements, as it was a hands-on alternative to the Victorian certificate of education. Over the last 18 years VCAL has provided a stepping stone for many students into further education and training as well as jobs in industry.

I worked for Lynne in the Altona electorate office in 1998. She was an incredible role model and a generous and supportive mentor. As someone who grew up in the western suburbs, Lynne attended the University of Melbourne, trained to be a social worker and worked as a community education officer in Sunshine. Lynne knew the transformative power of education from her own lived experience. In a speech made to this place 9 February 2006 during her time as Minister for Education and Training, the Honourable Lynne Kosky said:

> Of all the factors that have the potential to increase an individual's opportunities, education and training is the most enabling. It allows individuals to equip themselves to live fulfilling, productive and satisfying lives.

Minister Kosky went on to say:

> A quality education and training system does not respond only to contemporary needs and issues; it should also identify and anticipate future needs and challenges.
>
> It is a fundamental community and social glue, while being a bridge to a more prosperous and harmonious future.

And I must say that I agree.

Lynne was so proud when I went on to become a teacher, as she valued education and the teaching profession so highly. As Minister for Education and Training, Lynne strongly supported legislative reform for vocational training, and 18 years after VCAL was first introduced, I am proud that we are continuing to ensure that Victoria's education system meets the academic and vocational needs and expectations of our community in the 21st century.

This bill will replace VCAL with the Victorian pathways certificate, the VPC, and the Victorian certificate of education vocational major. The bill enables a new certificate scheme by providing for a separate VPC which will replace foundation VCAL, and for the intermediate and senior VCAL to be integrated into the VCE. There will be a clear delineation between the VCE and the VPC. As a secondary school teacher for over a decade, a parent of two school-age children and the wife of a tradesperson, I am very pleased that Victorian students will be able to access vocational specialisation streams within the VCE from 2023. Importantly, these changes will enhance the education skills development of Victorian students by enabling access to an increased range of curriculum options, including a combination of subjects that are currently restricted to our VCE or VCAL students.

By establishing a single senior secondary certificate incorporating VCAL into VCE, we are preparing our senior students for success beyond the school gate by creating opportunities for them to shape their own future, determine their next chapter and follow their dreams. I think it is very important that we remind ourselves of the Liberal-Nationals approach to vocational education and training when they were last in power. In 2012 the Victorian Liberal-Nationals coalition, under the leadership of Premier Ted Baillieu, made large funding cuts of $300 million to the Victorian TAFE public education system, a major deliverer of VCAL courses for young and mature-age students, and cut funding to secondary school VCAL programs. This resulted in students being unable to access many courses and job losses for VCAL providers for secondary schools.

I am proud that the Andrews Labor government has not only rebuilt our TAFE sector but introduced free TAFE. This initiative is not only delivering a modern, skilled workforce but changing lives. I must say that I was very pleased to hear the shadow minister committing his ongoing support to vocational training in Victoria. That is really pleasing to hear.

To our senior secondary students who have faced a very challenging and disrupted final two years due to the global pandemic, I would like to express my absolute admiration to you. I wish all our year 12 students, who have navigated their final years like no other cohort, all the best for their final

assessments and exams. And as someone who taught some of these students when they were in years 7 and 8, I have a very strong vested interest in their wellbeing and success. I could not be prouder of our students across Ballarat and Victoria. Your best times are still to come, and the future is whatever you want to make it.

In concluding, the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021 will give all students the learning opportunities to develop the skills and capabilities needed to achieve positive outcomes in further education and vocational training that will lead to sustainable employment and fulfilled careers. I welcome this bill, I commend it to the house and I am so pleased that we are going to have a next generation of amazingly supported and educated young people entering our workforce and building an even better, stronger Victoria.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (10:11): I rise to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021, which basically is a bill that is going to provide transitional arrangements regarding the Victorian pathways certificate and vocational major within the VCE and enable the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority to extend the 12-month training period regarding a registered training organisation's management for the transition from superseded training packages. It is a bill that we very much support, and you have heard it outlined in a detailed manner by my colleague the Shadow Minister for Education, the member for Croydon. I would like to take this opportunity to discuss some of the issues in the education system which I think this bill is trying to address, and I endorse that approach and I absolutely embrace this opportunity.

The Firth review, which the minister referred to in his second-reading speech, identifies that one of the principles that this change in the legislation will address is lifting the quality and perception of vocational education. I want to highlight that point because I think what we have got is something in society that we seriously need to address, and I hope this bill begins to address that. I think for the last at least four decades we have been going down a pathway of not celebrating the diversity of skills our children have when they are in an education facility. We have been very academically leaning, and we have been encouraging our kids to strive—and that is all very well—but at the expense, I think, of recognising that striving also includes the professions that require skills as well as academia to be successful in. So what I am saying is that over the last 40 years I think we have gone away from celebrating and valuing people whose skills are around using their hands or being able to have great interaction with other people, supporting and helping them. We have used our education system as a platform to just make people think—children in particular, and parents—that unless you are academic, unless you are going to do very well in VCE and unless you are heading over to university institutions, you are not successful. And that is a real worry, because what we are doing is making those children who are not able to absorb information in a written form and then regurgitate that information, showing that they understand it in an exam technique format, feel like failures. That is what I am seeing: our children who are not highly successful in academia are falling out of the system and sometimes feeling like failures. So this opportunity that we have here to embrace VCAL and to embrace vocational education and highlight it as equal to the academia of getting an ATAR score is highly important, and I cannot push this enough.

I remember when I was young, and of my two brothers and my sister and I—it was a family of four—the boys were deemed dumb and the girls were deemed smart because boys often mature later. Now, I do not know whether that is a fact or not, but it certainly seems like my experience. My brothers both became very successful, having left school, one in year 9at 15 and the other in year 10 or 11—year 11, I think. They were very much unable to cope from a reading and writing perspective too well. They would probably hate me saying that. Both went on to become very successful. I remember my brother at 19 said, 'I want to be a policeman'. He started learning to spell properly. He asked for my help. I used to ride my bike and he used to run beside me and I would say, 'Spell hospital; spell whatever', and help him along. He is a very successful detective today. So is my other brother, who ran a business and left school at 15, as I said.

Now, I remember my eldest son coming home and saying to me at about the age of 15—and please excuse my French, because these are his words, not mine—'Mum, if you don't go to university, you're a dumbass'. Yes, I know, he should not have even said that to his mother at such an age, but he did. I remember thinking, 'Where did that come from?'. It certainly did not come from his parents, it did not come from our family unit, but it is the culture. Now, I absolutely am very proud of all people who do well in what they choose to do in life. I always talk about the bus driver that got my kids home and to school safely every day, the most important person in my life. We should be celebrating these professions, and when kids in school want to become a bus driver or a personal care attendant and look after an ageing community in an aged-care facility, for example, or become that barista that you say hello to every morning that makes your day because they are bright and they are sparky and they are happy and they start your day off well, these people are incredibly important too.

I ran a farm for a very long time and spent a lot of time trying to encourage people into the profession of agriculture—and it is a profession, and it is a really important profession, to actually create food that is of a high quality and a high standard. People who want to become farmers often are very intelligent and very capable at recognising grass species and soil types, and you learn as you go. I mean, I just did endless education, and it was relevant, so it was interesting. And that is the theme we have got to give our kids that understanding of: you will love what you learn. If you want to become a bus driver, you need skills to make sure you understand the road rules, to make sure you understand safety, to make sure you have a rapport with children. These are skills that we need to make sure we embrace. The schools through vocational education and training processes can really embrace this, but I think the culture we have in the schools—and I am not denigrating the teachers in any way, shape or form—is simply the culture as a society we have been going down the line of, so I hope this provides a fantastic opportunity to really change that, and I hope the government uses this opportunity to address that culture.

We have addressed diversity in the workplace. We have addressed bullying in the workplace. We have addressed family violence through campaigns. I actually think we need a campaign to embrace vocational education and training and show those children that do not want to go on to academia that they are valued and they are valuable, so our system then actually creates an environment of equality for all types of diverse learning skills. In our region we have tried to embrace this opportunity through many things, like the Hands On Learning program that the Warrnambool College have, led by Leon Carey, a great tradesman in our area who is very community minded. Then at Brauer College we have got Bruce Miller, who also runs a similar program. They actually grab those kids who are falling out of the system and actually getting into a little bit of trouble sometimes because they are not engaged properly because what they like to do is not understood. They have created a program where they can build stuff, repair stuff, help our community by doing things like tables and chairs for community areas at the beach or the parks. These kids love it, but trying to get funding for those programs out of the Department of Education and Training has been nigh impossible. That tells me that the government have not really understood that we need to embrace that diversity of skills. So I hope we will also see these programs that have been created to fill that void, to fill that gap and to help these kids stay engaged really be embraced and funded properly.

The other program that has come about from the community recognising this problem is the program that is funded and called the Neil Porter foundation. It is run by a young man, Matt Porter, whose father was a teacher who it is named after, who really did recognise the importance of this sort of work. It is funded a lot and supported incredibly by David Hetherington from Pacific Materials Handling and many other companies such as Midfield Meat, and Dean McKenna has been a big promoter of this program. They are going into the school, getting the kids and showing them the industries that you can get into and the careers. It is really helping because the government are not funding careers teachers in such a way that they can focus on career planning and promotion. It is sort of a secondary role that they have as a teacher, and then that is tacked on as a career teacher. I hope the government takes the opportunity to run a campaign to promote vocational education and the value of it and the value of the students who take that on, because I tell you what, I cannot fix my own toilet, I cannot tile my own

roof and I cannot look after my elderly mum all the time. I need people in the community with those skills, which are very valued. So I commend all the people in my community who have also recognised this as a challenge. Let us get behind our kids and tell them all how valued they are because everybody has a role to play. Those ones we lose out of the system that end up sitting on the couch, that never go through the milestones of work—it is our responsibility, it is our fault and we can do better.

Now, I just want to finish by saying that does not mean I do not value the importance of academia, and I did talk about it being part of equality. We are about 15 days away from the end of the year 12 school year, and that means the English exam on 27 October is quite soon. So I want to take this opportunity to congratulate them all, who have done so well—good luck with your exam. It is not the be-all and end-all; it does not define you. Good luck.

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (10:21): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021, and I would like to particularly congratulate the Minister for Education and the Minister for Higher Education in the other place for bringing on such a critical piece of legislation that really builds on what this government's legacy has been in focusing on education from the inception of this government until now.

As you would be aware, the Andrews Labor government is absolutely committed to improving our state's education system and retaining our reputation as the Education State, and this bill before Parliament puts us further down the path to achieving that. As you would be aware, my pathway to choosing to become a member of Parliament was absolutely based in being passionate about education. I am the daughter of two teachers. Both were high school teachers and taught in the public education system, and they have really instilled in me the values that I hope I demonstrate today and are so important to public education—of public service, of contribution and of responsibility. As I said, they are values that I try and live every day of my life, and I hope I instil them in my children as well.

I sent both of my kids to the local public school, and I will always stand up for our students in Victoria to secure better opportunities and educational outcomes. As I mentioned, before I entered Parliament the catalyst for deciding to stand for preselection and then ultimately becoming elected was about community activism in our space. As you would be aware, under the Kennett government Footscray High was closed down and sold off, and that left a dearth of opportunities for kids in the western suburbs to attend a local public high school. In fact at that time our kids in the inner west had further to travel to their local public high school than any other children in metropolitan Melbourne. So working with the then Shadow Minister for Education, now the Minister for Education, working with the then member for Footscray, Marsha Thomson, and also the then member for Williamstown, Wade Noonan, and being president of a local community group called SKYHigh, very conveniently named for Seddon, Kingsville and Yarraville, we built a campaign of community activism that had hundreds and hundreds of parents in their local area to lobby for a new public high school.

But not only was it a new public high school, it ended up becoming, thanks to the Andrews Labor government, the first of its type of school in Victoria and I think in fact in Australia—the Footscray Learning Precinct. Now, the Footscray Learning Precinct has pulled together all three tiers of education. We have partnered with Maribyrnong City Council to deliver early learning programs. We have then got a seamless transition that goes into our primary school system and our secondary school system. Then there are opportunities to partner with Victoria University—again, a massive legacy. My friend and colleague the member for Wendouree pointed out that it was part of Lynne Kosky's view to be able to have that seamless transition for kids in the western suburbs to move from that early learning through to tertiary education and have that continuum along the way. As I said, never before has this been done, and it is incredibly exciting to have been part of that journey and also to be seeing my kids and so many of my children's peers flourish in that environment.

I would like to give a particular shout-out to the executive principal, Frank Vetere, who has overseen the development of this school. I think it will be a fantastic legacy for both Marsha Thomson and also Wade Noonan to have seen something like this come to fruition, because that is what this government is all about. It is about saying that every student in every school deserves to have high-quality education, including vocational and applied learning options. And the Education State reflects our focus on excellence and equity by reducing that disadvantage in Victorian schools and equipping students with skills necessary to succeed in their careers and lives.

I would like to pick up on the point that the member for South-West Coast actually made earlier in her contribution on this, which was around having an education system that values kids of all abilities, not necessarily just those who choose to tread an academic path. As I mentioned before in my contribution, my parents were public high school teachers. But they also, when they left the high school system, went and became teachers in the TAFE system in New South Wales. So having those values that really recognise the contribution that kids who are not necessarily academic can make—that they should not be stigmatised for not being academic but can choose another path and go on to make enormous contributions in so many other parts of what we need—is so critical. My parents were the first in their families to actually get a tertiary education, and that was done through teachers scholarships at the time. I think we have seen a continuum in my family of valuing education and being able to see how kids of all ages and all abilities can flourish under an education system that supports them and supports the different pathways that they go down.

Since 2018–19 this government has invested $315.5 million in reforming the senior secondary school system, which sets our kids up for the future. An important part of this was the $109 million to transform career education in Victorian government schools to help students make better career and pathway decisions and meet those demands of a changing, globalised job market. As I said, career education has never been more important than it is today for our young people. Since being elected in 2018 it has been one of my biggest joys to be able to advocate for local schools to get their fair share, and each state budget has achieved just that. For all stages of their school lives, kids in Williamstown have access to world-class facilities. These include a $600 000 Building Blocks capacity grant for the One Tree Altona North children's centre; $3.8 million to upgrade Altona North Primary School's learning and meeting spaces; $10.2 million for Wembley Primary School to modernise their main building and have new learning spaces; a $2.3 million investment package for sporting facilities at Bayside P–12 College; $6.7 million for Bayside P–12 College for upgraded labs and classrooms, including the maths and science blocks; $1.3 million to upgrade the year 12 study centre at Williamstown High School; a whopping $29 million for the construction of the Seddon junior secondary campus at the Footscray Learning Precinct; and so much more.

Ms Vallence: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I appreciate this has been a wideranging debate, but I would ask for you to bring the member back to the bill. It is not a budget reply; it is a speech on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill. Could you bring her back to the bill?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gambling and Liquor Regulation speak to the bill, please.

Ms HORNE: Well, thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. Look, I do feel it is important to recognise the massive contribution that the schools make in my electorate in providing children with a pathway for the future.

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:31): It is with great pleasure that I rise in this house to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021—that is a mouthful. It is always a great pleasure to rise in this place to talk about all things education. I am very proud to be a part of this Andrews Labor government, continually supporting the education sector and our educators, providing record investment and reforming where

we can and where we see need for improvement. There was obviously work done by the Firth inquiry, and some of those key recommendations are discussed in this legislation.

Of course it would be remiss of me to not also start by saying a very big thankyou and giving acknowledgement not just to both ministers in this place and the other place but also to their hardworking staff and to the incredible people at the department, who have no doubt done a mountain of work. My sincere thanks to all of those involved in this incredibly important piece of reform that we are getting on with here today.

I note that there are some differences in politics and between parties—in this place we see that all exposed more often than we would like, but that is the reality of it—but it is very good and heartening to see wideranging support for this reform here today. It also reminds me that it was not too long ago when I was doing my VCE. It would have been great to have some of the options that are being discussed here—not just for me, perhaps, but also for many of my friends. It was only—what am I, 29 now—12 years ago, and for the member for Nepean it was probably a little bit later than it was for me. I can relate from a personal perspective to some of the reforms that this will result in, and I know they will be welcomed. Certainly from talking to—

Mr Fowles: Quit flaunting your youth over us.

Mr TAYLOR: Flaunting my youth, member for Burwood. I am 29 and my hair is out of control and receding at a rapid rate, so I am not sure many would agree with my supposed youth. But from talking to a number of principals and stakeholders across my community, I know this has certainly been welcomed. Obviously there is significant work ahead for them, for the department and for everyone involved, but it is certainly welcome all the same. It will mean young people right across this state can continue to get absolutely the best education in what we proudly call the Education State.

With a moment of indulgence I want to also pay tribute in this place—it has been some time since I have had the opportunity to speak on an education-related bill, such is the way of the world at the moment with COVID and Parliament et cetera—and put on record a sincere thankyou to our schools, to our school communities and to all of the young people all the way from kinder through to senior learning and TAFE and everything else in between. It has been an incredibly challenging period, we know, for some sectors of our workforce. Our frontline workers have done an amazing job, and I have always said healthcare workers and educators are two roles I would not want for quids. A really big thankyou to our principals and to our teachers and the families involved in our primary and secondary schools, because they have pivoted backwards and forwards, to and fro, and have done an incredible job of making sure that our kids still get a first-class education. And rightfully so—everyone deserves a right to a first-class education in this state, and that is in large part due to the significant and amazing work of every single educator and school principal and everyone else in between who has supported that work.

Of course we have seen some of the results. Look, I do not really subscribe to the idea that test results mean everything, but in some of the NAPLAN testing we saw some amazing results come out, and that is a great testament to the kids and to their families and to our educators in this state. I would like to say a massive thankyou to them. I am looking forward to having them back in school, with all kids moving back into school by early November, I believe from recollection, but transitioning this month. I know that there are so many looking forward to getting back into the classroom, seeing their mates. It is an incredibly exciting period as we get our community vaccinated and make sure that we mitigate as many of the concerns and risks as we can in our school environments, which we know can be, I guess, an exposure risk. But we are making sure we are hitting those targets and listening to the health and science on this to get our kids and our staff and everyone in between back into the classrooms as safely as possible.

I would just like to note as well that there is a school that has also taken the next step in helping get us back into the classrooms and helping to vaccinate the community in my local patch: Fairhills High School.

Mr Fregon interjected.

Mr TAYLOR: The member for Mount Waverley will know all about that.

Ms Vallence: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I appreciate that it is a wideranging debate and we are all in violent agreement about the education opportunities for our kids—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can you state your point of order? Is it on relevance?

Ms Vallence: but the status of vaccination of our kids does not feature as part of this bill. I would ask that you bring the member back to the topic of and clauses within the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It has been a wideranging debate, but the member for Bayswater did ask for the indulgence of the house to discuss teachers and the support for COVID measures, so I will ask him now to come back to the bill.

Mr TAYLOR: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. It certainly goes to the heart of some of the reforms here to be talking about one of my secondary schools in our local community. Fairhills High, as the member for Mount Waverley will be well aware, is an extremely well-established, much-loved and respected secondary school community in the part of the world that I represent very proudly. They recently helped to put together a vaccine pop-up over the weekend. Hundreds of people came down for their first and second AstraZeneca and Pfizer doses, so I just want to put on record my thanks to them. Principal Ian Van Schie came down and did a live video. He was remarkable. I of course was also remarkable. For those people who are reading *Hansard* and cannot quite tell if that was a joke, I will state that for the record. People can think I am a bit too confident as it is. Thank you so much to Fairhills High and to Ian and all of them for assisting in getting not just secondary students back in to do their certificates in person but also all of us back into the classrooms and back to doing the things that we love.

Of course we are here talking about, as I said, a really, really significant piece of reform. We know, as others have discussed in this place, it is very well supported by it seems all in this place, which is great to see. This bill will expand the powers of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority, otherwise known as the VRQA, and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the VCAA, in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to create a new category of foundation secondary course and foundation secondary qualifications to accommodate the new Victorian pathways certificate and facilitate the transition to a new senior secondary education certificate framework, including a new vocational major within the Victorian certificate of education. It will also give the VRQA the power to extend transition periods for superseded training products, consistent with the powers of the Australian Skills Quality Authority and apparently the Western Australian Training Accreditation Council. There you go. You learn something new every day.

As I said, we are very proud to be the Education State, leading the way here in Victoria. We know that we want every single student in every school to have access to high-quality vocational and applied learning options. As we emerge from the pandemic and as our economy undergoes rapid change, the ability to provide a great education and relevant high-quality training for our workforce will be extremely critical to Victoria's economic recovery and our future prosperity. That is why it is vitally important that our senior secondary system is best positioned to help students build the skills and capabilities to thrive in further education and training and move into rewarding careers.

One of the things that this bill that we are discussing here reminds me of is that there was this idea back when I was in school that everyone must study, must go on to university. I think we are slowly changing. In today's world we are much better at understanding that not everyone has one single distinct pathway, and this legislation helps to address that. Locally, through the Bayswater education

plan we are working with four great local primary schools—Bayswater Primary School, Bayswater North Primary School, Bayswater South Primary School, Bayswater West Primary School—and Bayswater Secondary College, and we have done some of this important work, working with industry, working with stakeholders through our massive jobs precinct. We are doing some of the early work here, which is in part discussed in this legislation, to link in secondary students to start that pathway—even in primary schools—linking them in with industry, with stakeholders, providing alternate pathways to make sure that kids can get the skills today for the jobs of tomorrow that they want.

This is incredibly important legislation. I am very proud to talk here on this government's proud reform agenda, backing in education, making us truly the Education State.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) (10:41): I rise today to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways and Other Matters) Bill 2021, a bill which the Greens will be supporting. This bill is primarily making changes to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, based on the recommendations of the Firth *Review into Vocational and Applied Learning Pathways in Senior Secondary Schooling*. These changes will see the current VCAL qualifications being brought into VCE as a vocational major as well as introduce the Victorian pathways certificate to replace the VCAL foundation course. There are also some technical changes that allow the Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority to register the VPC and provisions to support students and providers in the transition period. There are provisions also for the VRQA to extend the transition period of superseded training packages and for VCAT to review these extension decisions. The bill will also make it an offence to deliver these new courses without registration. The aim of these reforms is to improve the relevance and quality of vocational pathways as well as reduce the stigma that is associated with the VCAL programs, and certainly I very much support these objectives.

The Firth review found that there was inconsistency in the delivery and standard of VCAL across the state and that the program needed to be strengthened and broadened. It specifically recommended embedding vocational pathways into VCE to ensure that all students are provided with the same standard of education. Certainly whilst we need to make sure that we have the same standard of education for all our students, it is important that we do not just simply have a one-size-fits-all education system and that our schools cater for the widest range of students with varying interests, skills and pathways. We cannot just dress our students the same, teach them the same and expect them all to turn out the same. We need to make sure that we have an education system that caters for students and all the differences that they bring to their schooling.

I have heard from a range of stakeholders about these reforms, some of whom are really strongly supportive of the scheme and are looking forward to implementing the changes and others who certainly welcome the reform but are hesitant about some of the specifics and about the speed at which these changes are being implemented. There is some concern that removing the intermediate VCAL qualification will reduce job prospects for those who do not complete the two-year vocational major and instead leave with the enhanced certificate of attainment. It has also been raised with me that it is possible that only offering a two-year course could increase the year 10 dropout rates as some students may be reluctant to commit to a two-year program and would previously have chosen a single intermediate year and then decided to either continue their studies or move into work or further training.

I have also heard about how important it is for these reforms to safeguard applied learning principles. There is some concern about the curriculum design and that trying to fit vocational studies into a VCE-type template might not suit a number of students who choose this pathway, so it is crucial that young people continue to be consulted about the course offerings and the designs.

I have also heard concerns about the requirement that all educators who deliver the VPC and vocational major must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Whilst I appreciate that appropriately qualified teachers are very important, some educators in the TAFE sector may have training and assessment qualifications rather than teaching degrees and there is a risk some wonderful

mid- or late-career vocational teachers may not be able to deliver the vocational majors as they do not have the time or capacity to go back for a teaching degree.

Finally, it has been highlighted to me that it is vitally important that all education settings are given adequate time and resources to make sure that these reforms are successful across the entire state. Multiple people use the term 'poor cousin' to describe how VCAL has been regarded within the sector and how it has been underfunded and undervalued. These reforms provide a really great opportunity to give vocational and applied learning the space and resources required to ensure that students are provided with the best training and skills available to enter the modern workforce or proceed to further training, so let us make sure that this scheme is implemented carefully and that all schools and education providers, no matter where they are located across the state, are supported with time and resources to make the transition in a way that ensures its success for learners in Victoria.

Just more broadly on education, it is really important that students across our state are provided with high-quality education no matter where they live, what their background is or what their socio-economic status is and that teachers and schools have sufficient resources to deliver this. As many of us have struggled to provide home learning to our children this pandemic has really reminded us of just how valuable our teachers are, and we need to offer more than just thanks for or platitudes about their hard work in educating our young people. We need to thank teachers with higher wages, with properly resourced classrooms and with better conditions. That is how we can really demonstrate our thanks to them for their incredible work throughout the best part of the last two years. As we move beyond this pandemic and look to continue the recovery our society will need to embark on, what better value than investing in education by employing more teachers and more support staff so that all students—particularly those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable—have adequate support and opportunities for them to succeed at school.

I have said this before, and I will repeat it for the benefit of the chamber: Victoria's public schools are underfunded by the tune of around a billion dollars a year—a billion dollars a year less than the Gonski school resource standard, so now is the perfect time for state and federal governments to increase funding to public schools. We have got one of the lowest per-student funding rates across the entire country and we will not reach parity with other states until late into this decade. This just is not good enough, so I would urge both the state and federal governments to revisit their school funding deal that leaves our public schools around a billion dollars short of what is required and invest even more in our public schools.

Further to our public schools, TAFE of course has always played an important role in delivering vocational training and applied learning. I am a former TAFE student myself—good old Frankston TAFE—and it is fair to say I certainly would not be here today if it was not for a quality, affordable TAFE system. I have got great memories of my time at Frankston TAFE, and I certainly would not be here today without it. We have got to continue to support our public TAFE system, make sure that its funding is guaranteed and not continue with this highly contested marketisation of our training system that has been such an abject failure. Whilst I really support the free TAFE courses being offered by the government, I think we need to go further and make it all free. You know, public education, from kinder to public schooling to TAFE, should be free. It should be quality and it should be free, and I think that is the goal and that is the vision that we should be aiming for here in Victoria and in fact right across country. With that, the Greens will be supporting this bill.

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (10:50): It is my pleasure to rise and make a contribution around the somewhat verbosely titled, as others have alluded to, Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021. I would like to begin by thanking the Minister for Education's office and the minister for his and their hard work on bringing this bill to the chamber and, going back, on initiating the Firth review and making sure—I guess, with the previous status of VCAL as a bit of a poor sibling of the VCE—that we move on from that situation and progress our education system to make sure that those who seek a more vocational secondary school certificate rank, pari passu, are part of the same system as those who have a more academic

focus. It is a very important goal of this legislation and it is a very important goal of the government to make sure that students of all abilities with wide ranges of interests can access all of the options and all the educational support that they need.

I note with thanks the member for Croydon's speech on this bill. He noted that there was no opposition from any of the stakeholders. He said the changes are terrific, they are great. He said that they strongly support them, and it is refreshing to have a situation in this place where opposition shadows come in and do not just 'not oppose' but in fact offer full-throated support to legislation. I thank the member for Croydon for his mature approach to this and his very sensible and constructive engagement on this particular topic.

Many members over the course of this debate have taken the opportunity to talk about matters in their own electorates. I will take the same opportunity. No doubt that will incur the wrath of the Shadow Minister for Industry at the table, but I will wait for the point of order and we will work through that tedium and then get on with the job. It is important to note that, when we think about vocational training and the breadth of offers, there is a school in my electorate in particular, Ashwood High, that has been able to do a fantastic job at broadening the number of subjects available to students there and making sure that those more vocational type subjects, the subjects that will sit in the VCAL framework until this reform is implemented, are available to students there.

I am in an unusual position. In my family one of my sons has, I think, a slightly unusual mix of being very academic but also very, very keen on studying agriculture, which, whilst far from unprecedented, is certainly an unusual combination. It is the case that there are some shortfalls in the current arrangements in terms of addressing his educational needs, and whilst these reforms will be implemented when he enters year 12, they are important reforms and reforms that would make a big difference to his educational journey. So I am very pleased that the government has taken on this very, very important area and has actually looked to make sure that there are options that we offer those kids who might be academic or might not to study things that sit outside that sort of conventional academic matrix: English, history, geography—you know, those conventional liberal arts type subjects—and the maths and science type subjects. Those who seek to have a more hands-on component to their secondary education are being accommodated in this bill.

What does the bill do? Well, it creates a new Victorian pathway certificate—and that is important; I will come to that in a moment—which I have referred to as this vocational major within the VCE. So that new framework will replace VCAL. Now, VCAL was a very important reform. It was a very good reform—it was a reform of the Bracks government back in 2002—and it was very important that we brought those vocationally minded kids, the ones who wanted to study those more hands-on type subjects, into the secondary school framework and gave them all of the opportunities that were being afforded to kids who were studying the more conventional academic route. Whilst I absolutely applaud the reform, it is now approaching 20 years old, and necessarily, given everything we have been through over the last 20 months, we have learned a lot about the delivery of education and the best way to do it.

I think because VCAL has serviced a narrower cohort it has attracted less attention and less resourcing and ultimately sits at something of a prestige deficit when compared with the VCE. This bill does away with that. It makes sure that irrespective of the type of subject you study within your VCE you still get a VCE and you get, as a result of further reforms in this bill, a statement of attainment that addresses all of those non-academic things you have studied as well as the academic ones. So I am pleased that the opposition is supporting this bill. I am pleased that they have taken that positive and constructive approach.

The genesis of the bill sits in the Firth review, and I thank Mr Firth for his work in addressing these things. He is a very senior specialist in this space, has a lot of domain expertise and has done a terrific job. This bill acquits, I think, from recollection, recommendations 1 and 10 of the Firth review, and we will have plenty more to say, no doubt, about other components of it. But by introducing the vocational major and the new Victorian foundation pathways certificate, which is now going to be

known as just the Victorian pathways certificate, we really take a step forward in terms of the delivery of secondary education in this state and make sure that we are catering to students with all that breadth of ability.

The member for South-West Coast spoke very eloquently about the importance of those students who are less academically minded being catered for appropriately within the mainstream secondary education sector and not having to be educated at a different institution or via a different channel. And I think it is important, again, that we raise the prestige of those vocational courses within the VCE and make sure that they are delivered pari passu with the rest of the academic program contained in that certificate. I am pleased that the secondary school system remains a very clear focus of the government. It is something we have invested in very heavily. Despite the musings of the member for Prahran, we have invested very, very heavily in the education sector. It is part of Labor's DNA to do so. I think the minister at the table, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, spoke beautifully about the importance of education and teaching both in her family experience growing up with parents as teachers but also in her lived experience with the shameful closure of Footscray High and the importance to that community of reinstating those educational options for those kids in the west. Of course it is only Labor that builds schools and does not close them down. It is only Labor that expands the educational footprint in Victoria rather than seeking to constrain it, and I am very pleased that this bill takes further steps towards that end.

This is a bill that will allow students who fully or partially complete vocational or applied learning type subjects to receive this enhanced statement of results. That is the statement that will provide a fuller picture of their strengths and capabilities, their achievements and the things that they have done as part of their Victorian certificate of education, because whilst the focus often is on that percentile ranking that pops out at the end of a VCE process, for many students that is not actually the primary consideration, and indeed for many students it is not really a consideration at all. What is more of interest to them, to their future study and decision-making and to future employers is what other things they have done on their educational journey, and I think it is absolutely terrific that we are making clear that those other things, those things that might not necessarily contribute to the computation of a percentile rank, are nonetheless available for that student to share with potential educators or employers and making clear that education is not solely about academic results, it is about a whole bunch of other things. They are things that Labor has always supported, has traditionally supported and will continue to support, because we understand the importance of vocational education, as evidenced by in particular our investment in free TAFE. But we understand the importance of vocational education in the secondary school setting. This is a bill that addresses that very real need, and it is my absolute pleasure to commend it to the house.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) (11:00): It is a pleasure to contribute to the debate on this important bill before the house today, the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021. From the outset I would like to give a big shout-out to all of the principals, the teachers, the parents, the carers, the students and the school support staff in the school communities that I represent in Bendigo West, who have done an extraordinary job over the last 20 months in transitioning to home learning and back again and then back into home learning. It has been an extraordinary time, and I am just so proud that the schools in my electorate have done such an outstanding and amazing job.

This bill before the house today is a very important bill because it builds on this government's—the Andrews Labor government's—investment in and support for education across this state. I think when I look back over the last eight years that in the Education State of Victoria—which it now clearly is, which was our goal—the investment in and the improvements to education have just been unprecedented.

I note that the member for Wendouree mentioned that she was one of the first students in the intake of VCE students and was giving away her age somewhat. Well, just looking at this bill made me reflect on my time at school, and without giving away my age either, I did the HSC, so that is going back an

awfully long way. Growing up in a small town like Maryborough, there were two options—you either went to the high school and did academic courses or you went to the tech school and you did hands-on trades courses. How things have changed since then. I reflect also on the pathways that my children have taken over the last couple of decades and the difference in the way that they have achieved their goals and gone on to their different careers. My eldest went to Dookie Agricultural College and got his degree there, my second child did a psychology degree at Latrobe Uni, my third went to TAFE and did a diploma in community services and disability and my youngest did an apprenticeship. I think when you reflect on the different pathways and opportunities available to students today, it is so, so different to what it was even just eight years ago.

We have increased funding for skills and training through our TAFE support. We have increased funding for apprentices. We have got better connection with industry and business for pathways, and in my electorate, we have the wonderful program called Passions and Pathways, which has been operating since 2012 and supported and funded by this government. It is run through the Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network, and it is a partnership between the primary schools and workplaces which was conceived and nurtured right in Bendigo. And I know that the program has been a precedent for other very similar programs across the state. It is for year 6 students, and it is a partnership between the Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network, as I mentioned, cross-sectoral primary schools, local governments and business. It gives students a taste of the world of work and fosters an appetite to succeed. The students engage with over 60 local businesses across the Bendigo region, and it gives those students an authentic experience of what they might like to do and what they aspire to do and reinforces the value of completing their education. The culture in our schools has changed so much over the last decade, and no one child has just one pathway to a future career. There are now so many opportunities for a broad range of subjects and skills that encourage students to think beyond what were traditional, and mostly academic, pathways.

This bill is really important because of one of the areas that I was really looking at—the support in this bill particularly for students with disability and additional needs and students with personal challenges. It is always challenging for students with disabilities and special needs to manoeuvre through the education system, to find that pathway that suits them. I know in my electorate Kalianna School has engaged heavily in the Victorian certificate of applied learning, in VCAL. Many of their year 12 and year 11 students take that VCAL pathway, and I know what a great benefit it is to those students to be able to do that. But this bill actually gives them opportunities to look for further opportunities and experience different ideas, different pathways. It recognises the skills and achievements of these students, who maybe are not ready to complete year 12 but can do the foundation pathways certificate, which is really important. Every year I get to attend the VCAL graduation for the Kalianna students, and it is such an exciting and proud moment for the teachers and the parents of those students, who achieve so much in that VCAL program.

The Firth review, which was commissioned by the government, made some significant recommendations. This came off the back of the need to make sure that all Victorian secondary students have access to high-quality vocational education and training and applied learning options. This bill, in implementing recommendations 1 and 10, will make sure that all the students have that access, that they will get the skills they need, and that, hopefully, will lead to further education and training—and ultimately the goal of course is for a great job and employment.

The Firth review also recommended that Victoria move to an integrated senior secondary certificate, with vocational education embedded in the VCE. In doing so, this certificate will replace the existing standalone VCAL certificate and thereby give all students the opportunity to develop both academic and practical skills.

There was significant consultation on this process. I heard the member for Croydon speaking about the time frame for the implementation, but this has also come off the back of extensive consultation over a two-year period during 2019 and 2020. That included consultation with students, families, teachers and with all of the schools, non-school senior secondary providers, peak bodies, industry and

other key education stakeholders. Over the past year the department and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority have consulted widely with students and families and providers as well. This included more than 20 public consultations on various aspects of the process, including on the draft curriculum, the certificate name, the enhanced statement of results and the draft certificate designs. Throughout the consultation the department met directly with many organisations that would be impacted by these changes. The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority held 11 targeted workshops with providers, including flexible learning providers, and over 3350 participants have attended a Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority webinar on certificate designs and the draft curriculum.

As I said, this bill builds on this government's investment in and support for schools and training pathways. It is about ensuring that no matter where your child is from or what school they go to, they have the opportunity to make a choice—and that choice is between, obviously, learning a trade, a skill or further applied learning or choosing the academic path—but irrespective of what a child will choose, that they have the support, the encouragement and the investment from government to make sure that they have the best pathway for them. I think that our schools, our teachers and the principals across Victoria in our public sector, as well as in our independent and Catholic sectors, have a really good understanding now of what those pathways are. Reflecting on the *Bendigo Education Plan*, which I was pleased to chair, it is very clear that the schools in my electorate have a very good understanding of what opportunities are available to students, and this bill will make sure that those opportunities are extended. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (11:10): I too rise to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021. As someone who sits on the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, that bill is quite a mouthful indeed, but probably rightly so, because this bill contains some really significant reforms. In essence this bill is all about providing greater opportunities for Victorian students. It is something that is really, really important to bring before this house, and it is something that I know my colleagues and indeed this government feel very strongly about.

Under our government, the Andrews Labor government, we have built Victoria as the Education State, and that is because we all strongly believe that our kids deserve the very best access to a high-quality education system. And I always say that with a smile because I have to reflect that each and every time I talk to my mum—and I talk to her on a daily basis—she will tell me that she has been speaking with her sister or her brother or other family members and she talks about how fantastic and how proud she is that she has got grandchildren who are in Victoria and being educated in our great Education State. It is quite funny because she always refers to Victoria as 'the Education State' even though my mum and all of her children—my siblings and I—were educated in New South Wales. She feels proud that her grandchildren will get an excellent, first-class education here in Victoria.

I have stood before this house on many occasions and indeed on a regular basis out in my electorate to talk about how no child's opportunities should be defined by their postcode. Regardless of what side of the West Gate Bridge you happen to ride your bike around in the neighbourhood you grow up in, you should have the same opportunity as kids who are in other postcodes right across this state. And I say that kids in the outer west deserve just as great an education as those in the inner west and indeed in those wealthier, leafier eastern suburbs.

Now, if we are talking about the Education State, we often talk about the incredible infrastructure build that this government is getting on and delivering. You only have to look 30-odd kilometres west into Tarneit to see the record infrastructure investment that is happening right now in the outer west in my electorate of Tarneit. In the last four years alone we have seen four new schools open in my electorate, and we have got another five schools at the very least in the pipeline. What makes me very happy is to think that in this year's budget we announced funding to go ahead and acquisition land for the much-needed but always very elusive high school in Tarneit. And I say to anyone in my electorate listening right now: this is not going to be a senior school, this is a years 7 to 12 high school, a proper high

school, that we are going to get on and deliver in Tarneit. Also in this budget we announced funding for construction of a much-needed school in Truganina, another high school for years 7 to 12 for kids in Trug. This is really important because in upcoming years the population in Tarneit alone is set to go to 81 000 people. Tarneit and Truganina are two of the fastest growing suburbs in this state and sit within one of the largest growth corridors here in this country. The investment into schools like these high schools—and we are getting on and delivering so many new primary schools, with kinders attached, I might also add—is what investment by Labor governments looks like. That is what investment in the outer west by this government looks like.

Now, we talk about the importance of building new schools—and that is a conversation that I have on a daily basis—but it is also really important to go ahead and invest in the schools that already exist, and there are a lot in my electorate. There are also a lot of schools that are looking pretty tired or indeed in need of a major upgrade and face lift to get them to standard. It makes me very proud when I think about the importance of getting on and also looking after and investing in already existing schools. I think about two, and I do not have favourites, but they are schools that are very close to my heart because I have spent so much time there and spent a lot of time with the principals, who are like pit bulls in delivering better facilities and services for local kids. They are The Grange P–12 College and Hoppers Crossing Secondary College. Each of these schools has received very close to or just over $10 million worth of major upgrades that will change the facilities and infrastructure in Hoppers Crossing. That has been well overdue. That is what Labor governments do, and I know that kids are sitting in classrooms now that are already upgraded at The Grange or are sitting in classrooms that will very soon be upgraded at Hoppers Crossing. This is going to benefit kids who are at school right now, but it is also going to benefit generations of children who will go to those schools in the near future.

When I turn my mind to this bill, the contributions in this house have really talked about some of the significant changes that we are making to our VCE and VCAL systems—just listening back in my office, it was interesting. I think about when I was at school and the stigma attached to kids that were either going to do their HSC at the time or going through the pathway of TAFE and looking at getting a trade. There was a stigma attached to that. My brother went through that. He had two older sisters that went through HSC and went on to university, but he was not greatly academic. It was not a—I would not say 'welcomed'—celebrated decision that he would go through and get the skills that he needed to get a trade and get a job in the workforce and not go on to university, and we know that is VCAL here. It should be a celebration. No child should feel that because they are not going to sit exams through the VCE and go on from high school somehow the VCAL system in Victoria is less important or will deliver less of an education, or more importantly, reduce their opportunity to get their job. Every child in Victoria should feel extremely proud of the type of education that they will receive.

The life span of VCE and VCAL systems is something that we on this side of the house can be very proud of. It was the Bracks government that moved Victoria away from the HSC model and introduced VCE and VCAL in 2002, and that is pretty close to 20 years ago. Since then it has made a significant contribution to getting many Victorian students through their education and providing them with the skills they need to go on to higher learning, whether that be at university or TAFE. What we know on this side of the house is that no education system is perfect, and I always think that the difference between good government and great government—and indeed this Andrews Labor government is a great government—is that great governments are always looking for ways to improve. They are always identifying the gaps in the system that need to be fixed and improving systems and processes and facilities and so on, and that is what this government is doing and that is what this bill is in fact delivering. It is why our government commissioned the Firth review to look at how we can improve our vocational education and provide even more opportunities for Victorians that do not actually involve any university, and it was an acknowledgement that those other opportunities, those other jobs, are just as important. Let us face it, we need those jobs to be filled if we want to get on and deliver many of the great programs and infrastructure projects that we have currently got underway in Victoria at the moment because of this great Andrews Labor government.

There are so many great things I could say about this bill. The one thing that I do know is that kids in the outer west, kids in my patch, are going to benefit from this. Moving the conversation away from the VCAL suddenly being this unwanted second cousin, if you like, compared to VCE and going on to university, is a really important narrative and it is a narrative that we need champions of. We need governments like ours to be that champion and lead the way for those children who will not go on to VCE, who have no intention of going to university and, let us face it, may not actually flourish at university and achieve what they want to achieve. VCAL will no longer be the second cousin. It will be right there sitting on equal footing with VCE, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (11:20): I also rise to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021. I get very excited when I see the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education introduce bills into this house, because it gives us another chance to talk about the continual and substantial Andrews Labor government commitment which has established Victoria as the Education State. It is probably fair to say that the Minister for Education could have dropped the mic quite a while ago with not only the capital investment but the significant education reform, but he does not. He continues in an astounding way, really. Every day it is another, 'Hold my beer—I've got more to do'. This bill is another example, and it really goes to the heart of our commitment to have an education system in our state that not only can we be proud of and is developing all of our children but is allowing them to be the best version of themselves, and that is not always the same. In fact it is never the same. Every one of our kids is unique, and I have got my own insights in my own family on that, which I will come back to.

But I go back to my own period at high school. The member for Bayswater talked about Fairhills High School, who have stepped up and are providing some vaccination hubs outside of hours, which I thought was a fantastic initiative. I got my HSC back in 1986, and I was the last cohort to get an HSC. The minister at the table, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, is with me in that cohort. I am guessing your Anderson score would have been a bit better than mine, Minister, but nonetheless I went through that period of high school doing maths/science. I had this thought as a young person that I would take over from my father and run the pharmacy. That is sort of what was expected, and of course I got my Anderson score in probably January or whenever it was of 1987 and there was a bit of a rude awakening there that that was not going to happen. So we found some other things to do, and for someone who did maths/science, now I get paid to speak for a living, so—I do not know—life is full of mysteries.

But at the time growing up through those years in the early 1980s, you know, Fairhills was a good school, and it is still a great school. There was a feeling as a young person that if somehow it went wrong and we had done the wrong thing or we got suspended or, heaven forbid, expelled, you would probably get sent to Ferntree Gully High. That was the next stage of where you would go—at least this was the perception of a 13- or 14-year-old young person—and then if it went really bad from there, you would probably get sent to the tech. So you would have gone to Ferntree Gully Technical School, and not only was that not right, but I think there is still a perception amongst some that the vocational pathways that are available to young people are somehow not the same as an academic pathway. The other members have spoken about that maths/science path. I did that path. I passed; I did okay.

I had a plumber come to my place a couple of years ago, as we had a leak in the front garden. I have been in IT for years and done analysis techniques to find problems; that is part of the job as an IT person. This plumber came, and there was a leak in the front garden—and no idea where, it was under the ground—and there was just water coming out everywhere. Within about an hour this guy had worked out exactly where the pipe was that was leaking and fixed it. Now, I could not have done that—not in an hour, anyway. I could have dug up the whole garden and eventually found something. Those vocational skills align with other skills of an academic nature. So whilst having two separate pathways, VCAL and VCE, has really worked for students who have done those, this reform allows that mix of complementary skills that do not necessarily fit the cookie cutter, and I think this is really exciting.

I go back to the last two years, where we have had our children at home doing remote learning, and I guess one of the light bulbs that went off early in the process last year was that all three of my children learn completely differently. My daughter is very, very academic, and she is doing very well—all my kids are doing well. But my two boys learn differently, and because they are in primary school we have been a bit more hands-on with them on a daily basis. They are both very bright kids, and we are obviously very proud of them, as everyone is proud of their kids. But Lindsay is more hands-on. His eyes will light up when he gets a task that could be academic in nature but is also a bit more hands-on. With the analytical skills, the problem-solving skills, he is very good. We bought some chairs for the house the other day, some computer chairs or something, and I said, 'Well, if you want your chair'—because one of them was his—'you've got to build it; you've got to put it together'. I presume I am not alone here, for other people who have kids. Half the time it is hard to get them to go and do tasks around the house and get off their devices. Well, the moment he started on this chair he was lost; he was just fully concentrating on the task at hand.

It got me thinking, 'How do we open up not only my own son but our kids to other possibilities?', and this bill I believe does that. This bill leads us to a place where kids who are doing academic classes can also see their own cohort having other possibilities. Someone mentioned horticulture a bit earlier; I am not sure which member it was. But if you take something like horticulture or like the plumber that I mentioned, there are obviously vocational skills that those people need to have a career in that area and need to go and do. But if you want to start your own business in those areas, there are financial skills, there are business skills and there are other skills that will enable you to be successful for the rest of your life.

Adopting the vocational areas of our education system within the VCE sends a very clear message to not only the students who will be partaking of this but also the parents that these are valid and celebrated skills. I have given a couple of examples, and we could think of millions of examples of why that is true. But I think this is a very important step, and as I stated, I commend the minister for taking this step. Since the Victorian certificate of applied learning, the VCAL, was introduced by the Bracks Labor government, it has made a significant contribution, and it has I guess progressed and evolved into what we are doing today. The people in my area who have done VCAL are leading fantastic contributions to our state.

This bill will enable future parents, I would suggest, to consider other options when discussing education with their kids as they grow older. I know I certainly will be interested to speak about these sorts of reforms with my son in a practical way as he grows and goes through his educational journey. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (11:30): It is my pleasure to rise and make some comments on a bill that ultimately is about bringing education forward to not distinguish between those that are embarking on a VCE–university pathway and those that are embarking certainly on more of a practical, VCAL, VET and trade-type pathway. What we need certainly going forward, particularly around the future jobs, is something that is quite seamless—not to be able to, if you like, paint in a light that one is better than the other. We certainly know in the job market that many of those trades, many of those skills, are so important. We have such a skill shortage here in Victoria, and we need to ensure that we promote the kinds of education programs that consider the options for young people as early as possible to get them to consider other trades and vocations going forward. So it is on that basis that we support any programs that actually highlight opportunities for young people in pursuing their own pathway that ultimately gives them options, opportunity and a job. That is why this is so important.

I want to highlight particularly some great things that are happening in my electorate of Caulfield and particularly, to start off with, Oakwood School. Oakwood School is part of the Caulfield Park community campus. It is a school that has many kids that have really struggled in other schools. They end up at the Caulfield campus of Oakwood to pursue more of a practical, hands-on education. Steve Kearney, who has been the principal there for some time, has embarked on some really interesting programs. These kids would not normally actually finish year 12; many of them would have dropped

out. But with a very hands-on approach, these kids at Oakwood, at Caulfield community campus, have been able to embark on music, engineering, trades—a whole, vast range of programs. They have taken kids that have got themselves in trouble with, say, graffiti to turn that into graffiti art, and the same with music as well in terms of embarking on their own in music engineering or performance.

When I have visited the school on a number of occasions I have been very impressed by the hands-on nature of the school. Also, there is a relationship between that school and Ardoch youth foundation, which I was very involved with for a number of years, promoting youth at risk. Ardoch provide a number of programs and support for that school as well. So it is a great school. Again, this is a school that offers VCAL and that offers VET. Certainly it is not a VCE-focused school; it is more about the kind of practical, hands-on approach to schooling and pathways. I think that is the kind of model that we should be looking at to provide further opportunities for these types of kids, who would normally not undertake a traditional VCE program.

More broadly as well, and it is highlighted by Oakwood and a number of other schools, during the lockdown many of these kids have not been able to embark on some of the practical programs that these schools would normally offer. I really wanted to just take a minute to pay tribute to many of the parents and the kids that have really struggled doing this, whether it is the cooking-type programs, whether it is woodworking—the stuff that you cannot do in your bedroom but that you need to do in your classroom. I know Yeshivah-Beth Rivkah Colleges run a great cooking program, and Glen Eira College do a fantastic cooking and woodworking program and a furniture production program. Glen Eira College have been running a timber program, woodworking program, for years. If you go and have a look at some of the equipment there, it could almost feature in a museum—it is that old—but it is still applicable to today. The great ability for those kids to turn their hand to a trade like that is outstanding, but again, because of lockdowns, many of these kids have not been able to participate in those kinds of programs, and it is really disappointing that that has been the case.

As I said, that is one of the things we are really desperate to see—those kids getting back into the classroom. It really does highlight the issues around lockdown. You cannot do this stuff over Zoom. You cannot do this stuff over the internet. You need to actually be present. And in many instances a lot of these young kids have suffered greatly because they just have not been able to do it. So I know, and I am glad that we are talking about this, options for kids in terms of pathways are really, really important, but I think it is also important to highlight that many of these kids have been without any opportunity to do any of this for a very, very long time here in Victoria, and we want to get those kids back.

I also think there is a great opportunity to be able to, in line with some of these pathways, link these kids to a job and also have some of the training done within the actual workplace, which does currently happen. I want to highlight a couple of opportunities that are happening, again in my local electorate of Caulfield, particularly in the disability space. I have been a very strong advocate of recognising ability and disability and ensuring that there is an equal playing field when it comes to the disability sector. I want to highlight just a few. All Things Equal Cafe runs a food program. You go in there and you could be served in that cafe by somebody with a disability and somebody without a disability. They do not distinguish. They ultimately offer a lot of young people a job and some training, which is really, really good. It is a great program. It is a great cafe. Again, that cafe has not been able to open during lockdown. They do run coffees at the moment, but I know that All Things Equal Cafe in Carlisle Street, Balaclava, is desperate to get those kids back into the cafe.

With those kids, particularly high-functioning kids, kids with autism, many of their parents are really, really struggling at home. We saw last week an example of a Victorian mother that has an autistic child who, through schooling, has been literally punching holes in the wall because that child is locked up in their home and has not been able to get out and about in the classroom—in this case, into the cafe with a job. That is the unfortunate consequence of many lockdowns. That is why, again, it is so important when we look at this pandemic to consider the mental health consequences of the pandemic as well—to get those kids that are particularly in need of other stimulus into those other environments

as well. All Things Equal Cafe does a fantastic job, and I cannot wait to see them open again with patrons inside enjoying a meal but importantly also those staff who they employ and they train.

Flying Fox, which runs camps, does a great job running camps, and Access also employs people and does a lot of volunteer training. That is a fantastic way to actually get in many of those young kids that are undergoing a higher education program but also to get some real training in working with kids with disability. They are two examples of programs that have been around a long time in my electorate that have done some fantastic work in the area as well.

I also want to highlight J-Air, which is a community radio station. I was talking with J-Air just the other day about the ability to bring some of the kids on a training program as well and them being the training provider. Bialik College, which I know the member for Hawthorn would have been to once or twice—I hope—is a great school, and I have a lot to do with them. They have a number of their kids that volunteer on the radio program, but there is obviously an opportunity for a pathway as part of that program. So I think there are some great opportunities.

I just want to again shout out to all of the kids in my electorate, all of the parents, all of the families and all of the teachers that have done it really, really tough. Whether it is Glen Eira College, whether it is the secondary schools, whether it is the primary schools or whether it is the Jewish day schools, all of them have done it really tough. I think when we are talking about the practical hands-on programs as we are today—where you cannot do it via Zoom; you have to do it face to face—that is where a lot of those kids have missed out the most. That is why we are desperate to get kids back in the classroom and we are desperate to get kids back working with one another, to learn from one another and to get the skills that will give them options today and a job tomorrow. That is why we support this program. We support this bill, and ultimately we want to give young people every possible skill and every possible opportunity to get a job in the future.

Ms HENNESSY (Altona) (11:40): I am very grateful to have the opportunity to rise and make a brief contribution indicating my support to the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021, and I do so for a number of reasons. This is an incredibly important bill, and at its heart it contains an unwavering commitment to the belief that our government holds in the potential of every single child and every single student. I do just want to reflect that we have heard some really fantastic contributions about people's individual pathways and experiences at school. We have heard some fantastic contributions about the power and possibility of finding that connection that keeps people engaged in educational settings. I have particularly enjoyed people sharing their personal experiences, and the great divide emerges between the HSC factions and the VCE factions in the Victorian Parliament. Lest there be any doubt, I am in the VCE faction, but I pay my respects to my elders from the HSC faction of the Victorian Parliament as well.

But it is, I think, a great testament to the commitment that Labor governments always have to doing everything we possibly can to keep young people engaged in the education system and to keep very focused on the purpose of education and connection to industries and jobs that are meaningful in the future, but to always have the wherewithal, the commitment and the passion to review and reflect upon how we can do things better.

As many of the speakers have shared with the chamber, the genesis of the change from HSC to VCE and then the inclusion of VCAL in 2002 was under the Bracks government, and I would just like to make a brief tribute to a former member for Altona, the honourable Lynne Kosky, who was the education minister at the time and who at the time of her retirement from the Victorian Parliament cited the creation of VCAL as one of the proudest policy achievements of her time as a politician. That was for a number of reasons and ones that sit behind the policy imperatives that justify, in my view, this reform. It is about making sure that we recognise the contribution of different learning approaches and the power and possibility of keeping people engaged with good education and good industry-based training and ensuring that we are not consigning some cohorts of students and saying, 'Look, we just can't make the education system work for you. It's all too hard'. The education system fails if

it does not work for everybody. It has got to meet that very binary threshold test, and that is what has sat behind and beneath these reforms over many, many years.

I do just want to again thank the Minister for Education and also Minister Tierney, who are so personally and passionately motivated by making sure that we have a system that is fit for purpose and that is forward focused and ultimately believe in the potential of every single student and that we need to have an education system that continuously gets better but that is also linked to vocational education and training opportunities and ensures that we are creating pathways for people to not just have fulfilment but to have jobs of the future, where they can earn and be dignified in how they are remunerated and where they feel valued about what they do each and every single day. Those are quite lofty tests and aspirations for any education or training system to have, and I think that as you look at the Firth review you see where there are opportunities to get better. There is a series of recommendations, and recommendations 1 and 10 are what lead us to this bill.

I think one of the important issues is how we better entrench VCAL as an option. I have heard it referred to as the poor cousin, the Clayton's VCE. All of those things indicate that we have still got a cultural problem around understanding and putting fundamental value on the skills that sit behind those that choose to do a VCAL pathway and then perhaps go off and work in different trades areas or find other skill-based training that then generates a good and dignified pathway for their life. So there is still cultural work that needs to be done, and how we all conceive of value and success and meaning and all those issues I think is very germane to how we structure education and how we celebrate what is meaningful and valuable as well.

One of the great achievements in this bill is that it says that the VCAL option and that pathway is very much part of the VCE option. There is an accountability put on schools around having school-based and industry-based training to make sure that we are also holding schools and the education system accountable and that there is recognition of the inherent value of those students. It might be because of the circumstances and chaos in their home lives that mean that they are not ready for VCE, it might be that they are people that learn differently, but ultimately creating a pathway to keep those young people still engaged in a system gives them a pathway in order to not just have a meaningful year 12 and year 11 experience but also it creates pathways that then connect with jobs and with education and vocational education and training settings that are meaningful in the future.

I heard the member for Burwood, like a peacock putting up its plume, share his wonderful Latin knowledge with the chamber. 'Pari passu' of course is Latin for 'equal footing'. In describing the policy aspiration in those terms I think the member for Burwood was really speaking to some of the value judgements that are still too barnacled on to our perceptions of value in the education system and in actually trying to ensure that this is not seen as a Clayton's VCE, that it is not seen as the poor cousin but is indeed a very demanding, highly valued pathway. The jobs that those sorts of pathways can lead on to are a great testimony to that. So I do very much welcome these reforms. I think they are incredibly important.

I do also want to thank and acknowledge the work that teachers have done, particularly in the course of lockdown in recent times. As the member for Mount Waverley observed, when you are at home dealing with remote learning it does sharpen your mind about the value of teachers and about the value of school systems. The way in which they have had to continually adapt to the challenges and the demands of remote learning is something that we should not just say 'thank you' for. We should remember, and we should remember that forever. We should remember it at budget times. We should remember it at enterprise bargaining agreement times. We should remember it every time we hear that annoying person who likes to tee off on the value of teachers at family or friendship events. We need to make sure that we translate and transform our gratitude and respect for those that work in the teaching professions and administer schools, and we need to make that meaningful. We need to make sure that the impact on us is indelible.

I am absolutely confident, at least on this side of the house, that we will continue in our efforts to make sure that we are funding at levels that have never been seen before and that we continue to engage with our workforce in a way that demonstrates that they are valued—not just around the capital that we build but around how we remunerate them, around how their work is classified and how we ensure that there are meaningful pathways for those that are in those professions to become leaders and to continue to specialise. Ultimately we live in a world that can no longer just be about primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational education that is finished by the time we hit our mid-20s. We need to be lifelong learners. We are all going to have to be able to adjust in the way in which we learn, in the way in which we are trained, in order to make sure that we have an economy, a society and a community that is fit for purpose for the changing nature of work in the future. This is an incredibly important part of that future, and I commend the bill and thank all of those that have worked so hard in order to ensure that the next great wave of education reform serves to benefit the children of the state of Victoria.

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (11:50): I rise just to make a few quite short comments on this bill in relation to, I guess, its impact and benefits to those people in the community with special needs. I follow on from some commentary that has been provided by previous speakers in relation to the clarification and additional pathways that will provide benefits to those in our community with disabilities. It is an area where we have certainly as a society come a long way in providing opportunities for those in our communities with special needs. I can remember, well prior to my election, being on the local committee for the establishment of the special school in Bairnsdale and working with the local member of Parliament there at the time to get that up off the ground and running.

On the whole our education system and our teachers and our school environments do a terrific job in dealing with our children with special needs and providing opportunities and the necessary supports that are required. Unfortunately from time to time we have issues that pop up that are often sadly well publicised in the media, where there is that small percentage that can and should do better in relation to the education of our special needs children. So whilst we have come a long way and whilst we generally do things very, very well, there is always room for improvement.

I want to speak for just a few moments on one of our social enterprises in East Gippsland, in Bairnsdale as a matter of fact, that we actually got up and running shortly after my election in 2010 with some support funding from the state government, and that was the Cells Cafe in Bairnsdale. It was basically the transformation of the old police station in Bairnsdale into a social enterprise cafe. It was called the Cells because the old cells at the Bairnsdale police station, which I will put on the record I never saw the inside of in my youth, became a very prominent feature of the Cells Cafe in Bairnsdale. The old bars are there as you walk into this cafe. Now, why I mention the Cells is because it is run by Noweyung, which is our predominant disability support provider in our region, and it provides a great training opportunity for the young people within our community. It is particularly close to me because my own son has recently started doing some work experience there and is one of many with special needs who have gone through that system and obtained skills in the hospitality sector which then give them the opportunity to be able to go out and, I guess, work in cafes, restaurants and other hospitality outlets. Why it is so important in my region is because East Gippsland relies predominantly on tourism and hospitality. We do have very important timber and farming sectors, but to provide that pathway for those in our communities with special needs is very, very important, and it is a very, very successful program that I hope will be further expanded into other areas around the state.

Now, of course we have an increasing number of social enterprises in Victoria that do support the training and that transition of our younger people from the school environment into the workforce. But whilst we have seen significant and major growth in that area, I think it is an area where government has a responsibility to further expand. We do not have to reinvent the wheel. There are a lot of very, very well-run and successful social enterprise ideas that can be duplicated around other areas of the state from the models that currently exist.

Before I finish I also just want to—obviously in this time of the coronavirus—give a quick shout-out to our teaching fraternity and the work that they have been doing over the course of the lockdown period. My household has a very small insight into that. My wife is a teachers aide at a primary school in East Gippsland, and knowing the level of work and preparation and challenge of educating students remotely with often the challenges of poor internet connection and communications has been quite difficult. In my closing remarks I will just give a shout-out to all those workers in our school communities who have gone above and beyond. I think that they will certainly be looking forward just as much as the students to getting back to school, and the sooner that happens the better.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (11:56): I rise to make a contribution on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021. When elected to government almost seven years ago now we made a commitment to establish Victoria as the Education State. That meant a state that would value educational opportunities equally for every Victorian student regardless of their circumstances. It also meant a state that ensures that students are given every possible chance to acquire the skills and knowledge that they need to lead rich and fulfilling lives and make great contributions to our society.

Since that time we have seen record investments made to reform our school system through both buildings and programs, and it is hoped that this will ensure that students are even better prepared to embark on their future lives and careers. In the electorate of Thomastown alone well over $80 million has already been spent building new and redeveloping old schools. This builds on top of the grants and maintenance funds as well as the recurrent spending increases.

This bill provides such an important platform to further reform our secondary school system in a manner that provides opportunities to prospective and current students. In fact it is a critical element of a transformational reform program that will create better education and training pathways for students to get the skills they need for the jobs that they want. The Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021 will implement recommendations 1 and 10 of the Firth review. Specifically the bill will deliver two new options to students in their final years of school and will commence from 2023. The bill will provide for the creation of a new category and qualifications by inserting a definition of 'foundation secondary course' and 'foundation secondary qualification', and it will also facilitate the smooth transition of Victoria's senior secondary system to a new certificate scheme that comprises both the vocational major within the VCE system and the Victorian pathways certificate.

The Victorian pathways certificate will replace foundation VCAL and is designed to support students to transition either to the VCE or to entry-level employment and VET. This pathway provides an additional option for students that may be at risk of leaving school early and also for students that have additional needs. As many speakers earlier have said, the current system has a VCAL stream and a VCE stream in the later years of the senior years of secondary school. This will put those together so that the VCAL system will be embedded within the VCE system and be given equal standing and equal weight rather than running alongside it as a separate program that often is given less attention.

The new pathway certificate and the vocational major within the VCE will provide an integrated certificate framework. This will include a rigorous and detailed curriculum. The certificate will then build on the best elements of VCAL within the VCE program but also include flexibility to provide some extra opportunities for senior secondary students. Those educational opportunities will be an education that is of course engaging, can be based on real life and also can deliver skills that are required and demanded in a flexible way in the future world of work.

This bill is important for so many reasons, some of which I have discussed, but we do see that it is even more important that it is coming at this time when we have seen such a disproportionate impact on young people across our state due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students have had to bear the brunt in many ways of the pandemic, with disruptions to their learning, impacts on their mental health and significant social implications and job losses in some of those hospitality areas. I think many people,

when they are in their higher years of school, also require a bit more spending money and often have to go and get part-time jobs—many of those around cafes and coffee shops—to get that little bit of money to spend.

So as we emerge from this pandemic, or this crisis, it has never been more important to recognise that young people must be given opportunities to acquire hands-on skills and ensure that those skills are just as valued and respected, in both our education system and society as a whole, as the academic pathways that lead on to university. And with the economy undergoing rapid change, the ability to provide great education and relevant high-quality training for the workforce will be vital to Victoria in leading recovery and future prosperity.

That is why it is essential that our senior secondary system and education system more broadly are very well positioned to help students build the skills and capabilities to thrive in future education and training and later on in life. These new certificates will provide all senior secondary students with access to the best aspects of both VCAL and VCE by delivering high-quality vocational and applied learning opportunities as well as the academic. The intention is really to lift the vocational aspect of years 11 and 12 to ensure they are on an equal footing, because trades and hands-on education and subsequent employment are just as vital and just as important as university qualifications and work, because education is not just about academic results and entrance scores to university. So the opportunities that this reform will make are critical to providing young people with a holistic education experience that encompasses integrated learning elements.

I look back and think about my family and my two sons, both of whom studied VCE and the academic path. When you look back, they really were not given an option or an opportunity to do anything different. The schools that they went to did not really put an emphasis on VCAL or vocational programs, and I feel that they would have significantly benefited if they had been given the choice and the opportunity to experience other forms of learning rather than being really told that there was just one path. Every young person in Victoria deserves and will benefit from opportunities that provide theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills in order for them to continue on with life.

So these reforms are the result of extensive consultation as well as the commissioned Firth review. I think previous speakers have talked—in fact it might have been the Deputy Chair—about a lot of detail around the extensive consultations that have been produced as a result of these reforms and that have shaped the reforms that we are talking about today.

Finally, I would like to really take the opportunity to acknowledge the work, in the most difficult of circumstances, of principals, teachers and school staff during this pandemic. I also acknowledge the pressures, the stress and the disadvantage to students and their families. But we are nearly through it, and we have a path out through vaccination. I want to wish year 12 students the very best for their forthcoming exams. I look forward to rejoicing in the 2021 graduations and to returning to visit the schools and the students, which I very much miss. Although I have kept in contact with a number of schools and principals and some students, it is just not the same as being able to attend the schools and talk in person. I am very much looking forward to going to Lalor East Primary School to celebrate the redevelopment of that school and to see the fantastic buildings—even though it is a primary school and we are talking about secondary education reform here. I guess I am really looking forward to meeting up with the school communities again, seeing how the students are doing and supporting them, as this government will do, in getting back to a normal life.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (12:05): I am pleased to rise to contribute to the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021, and I have to say it is great to be here in the chamber debating important reforms such as this. I want to begin by thanking the Minister for Education for his commitment. Without him we would not be looking at this bill today.

The Andrews government has had a huge commitment to education right from the minute we were elected in 2014. We have heard contributions today from members talking about their experience in secondary school, and when I reflect on my experience in secondary school at Corio Tech, there were very limited options. These reforms make a huge difference to our secondary school students. My electorate has received an unprecedented amount of funding to upgrade and rebuild our schools, because we want every student in every school to have access to high-quality vocational and applied learning options, which is why this reform is so important.

Secondary schools in my electorate of Geelong—Geelong High School, Newcomb Secondary College, Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College, Oberon High and Belmont High—have all been major beneficiaries of an unprecedented amount of funding for infrastructure and resources, all really significant funding boosts for the schools in my electorate. As we come through the COVID global pandemic and our economy undergoes rapid change, the ability to provide for a great education and relevant, high-quality training for our workforce will be critical to Victoria's economic recovery and our future prosperity.

We know poor education outcomes lead to poverty. Good government policy such as this bill and the unprecedented amount of funding provided actually provides greater opportunities and makes a real difference in young people's lives. It provides better opportunities to students such as those mentioned earlier in this place with special needs, people with disabilities and Aboriginal students. You know, in Geelong it is incredible the number of Aboriginal students that have come into places like TAFE, for example, with the free TAFE courses. They are unprecedented numbers—we have not seen those numbers before—and that is because we are providing things like free TAFE, and now this reform will make a significant difference for those students facing many, many challenges.

That is why it is vitally important that our senior secondary system is best positioned to help students build the skills and capabilities to thrive in further education and training and move into rewarding careers. Teachers and students have had to deal with the challenges of home learning during the pandemic, and we know how tough that has been. I want to acknowledge our teachers in particular and the amazing job they do and the fact that they stepped up when they needed to to educate the students but also to support them during the global pandemic period.

I was so pleased with the Minister for Education's announcement to introduce mental health experts in every school in our state so that students that need it can access vital mental health support. I have had the opportunity to speak to many students during this global pandemic and their parents. I heard the challenges that they have had, but I also heard how significant the step-up of their schools has been to ensure that they get through this really difficult time. The feedback from parents, students and teachers on the mental health initiatives has been extremely positive, and overwhelmingly they are so thankful to the government for stepping in and making sure that we have those services in place within the school system.

This bill is a key element of a transformational reform program that will create better education and training pathways for students to get the skills they need for the jobs that they want. It is actually a pathway of choice, and it acknowledges the different pathways for students and how important they are. As I said earlier, Aboriginal students, people with special needs and people with disabilities that rely on those support mechanisms—a pathway that they can work through is just so important.

This bill implements key recommendations from the *Review into Vocational and Applied Learning Pathways in Senior Secondary Schooling* by former Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority CEO John Firth. The successful passage of this bill and implementation of these reforms will help ensure that our young people can receive a great education, learn about the world of work and develop strong life skills so that they can make informed choices about further study, jobs and their future. This will enable young people to contribute to and benefit from the growth in the Victorian economy and prepare them for active and fulfilling lives in the community. And of course, as I mentioned, the free TAFE courses, the opportunities for the future, are far reaching for students. As these free TAFE

courses have grown, I have had the pleasure of meeting many students who have taken up these courses, and I am pleased we have provided these opportunities for young students across Victoria, but in particular in my electorate.

The bill implements recommendations 1 and 10 of the Firth review. The bill amends the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to introduce a new Victorian Pathways Certificate, VPC, and vocational major within the Victorian Certificate of Education, VCE, into Victoria's senior secondary education system. This new certificate framework will replace VCAL. The bill also amends the Education and Training Reform Act to enable the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority to extend the transition period of superseded training products beyond 12 months. This bill introduces new definitions of a foundation secondary course and foundation secondary qualifications to accommodate the VPC. It allows the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority to register the VPC on the state register, register providers to deliver the course and register the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority to award the qualification. It enables a supported transition of providers and students to the new certificate scheme in time for its commencement in 2023. It creates offences for providing or offering to provide the new type of course or awarding or offering to award the new type of qualification without registration. It allows the VRQA to extend the transition period of superseded training packages beyond 12 months where it is satisfied that there would be a disadvantage to students if the extension were not granted or where exceptional circumstances exist, thereby aligning Victorian standards with the national VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority and the Western Australian Training Accreditation Council. It provides the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal with power to review a decision of the VRQA to extend the transition period of superseded training packages beyond 12 months.

From 2023 Victorian students will begin to move to a single integrated senior secondary certificate recognising academic and applied learning opportunities. The new Victorian Pathways Certificate and vocational major within the VCE will provide an integrated certificate framework which includes a more rigorous and detailed curriculum. The certificates will build on the best elements of VCAL, including the flexibility to provide senior secondary students with an education that is engaging and based in real life and that delivers in-demand skills for the future world of work.

This bill for my electorate is really significant, and the reforms that we have made as the Andrews Labor government are so significant. The support for these reforms is very clear in my electorate and I am sure across Victoria, and obviously the opposition are supporting this bill as well. It really will make a difference to the lives of students in my community. I know that, and I have heard from many of them the experiences that they have had. I suppose—as I started with my experience at Corio Tech—growing up in poverty to some degree, you understand the difference that government policy can make to the lives of people. The opportunities that have been afforded to me over time will extend to students going into the future as well. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (12:15): Many people think better with their hands. That is the reality, that is what we need. These skills are vital and urgent, and that is what this bill delivers. It is really important now more than ever. We are trying to come out of the pandemic, bring back the economy. We have unprecedented investments: the Big Housing Build—$5.3 billion for new affordable and social homes; we have the Big Build strategy itself. These are all major strategic investments in the pipeline, and we need the skilled people to build them.

I want to advocate again that I think we should have a television and marketing campaign to express this. We need to define the importance, we need to celebrate how it works. It is not a choice of one over the other. Of course we need people who are doing STEM courses and we need the best and brightest, but we can bring them together, lift them up together. This is how we create opportunity; this is what Victoria does. I speak as the member for Broadmeadows, because that is where they uniquely come together in one epicentre. You can have CSL manufacturing more than 50 million vaccines, the AstraZeneca vaccines, to save lives in Australia and overseas, and you can also have the investment that the Victorian government put in the last budget—$60 million for new skills, training

and jobs. The Minister for Training and Skills, Gayle Tierney in the other house, and I witnessed the agreement that was done in Broadmeadows. You should have seen the kids, they were so excited: 'This is a better opportunity in life. Here is your chance; here is the opportunity, and this is how we need to bring it together'. So now we are extending that into the school system to provide that opportunity and the pipeline of students who can come through and actually get these jobs. We will have a range of different courses. The high-priority industries are nursing, allied health and healthcare education services, quality aged care, mental health, pathology and disability, to help drive economic recovery and social development post the COVID-19 vaccine. This is in the Broadmeadows Health and Community Centre of Excellence. So we are lifting it up. We are saying, 'This is what we need, this is why this is important'.

There was another $5.5 million investment before this into a new sustainable plumbing centre on the Broadmeadows campus of Kangan Institute as well. Here is how you actually say to these students: 'Talent is not defined by demographics, but too often opportunity is. We're providing the opportunity for you'. And then, through the investment attraction, we have inspired private sector investment to come into the area. The old Ford site has just had the fifth anniversary of the closure. It devastated Broadmeadows. It changed people's lives. It was about identity for a lot of people. But we have got investment in there, and new industries and jobs will be created with driving technology as well.

Here is how you bring the strategy together and you connect the disconnected. You say to people, 'You're part of this community. You are valued. You are part of something bigger, and here's how you can have a better opportunity in life'. This is the government at its best, when it coordinates in this way. We have got another opportunity. I am trying to say to both the Victorian government and the federal government: after the record investments, make sure you come back to these communities; make sure they do not get left behind. The issue that I have always had is that Australia turns to Broadmeadows in times of existential threat, from wars to disasters, from economic peril to pandemic, and then too often, though, when the catastrophe has passed, it turns its back, abandoning Broadmeadows to worse disadvantage, compounding complexity, like an orphan. We are not going to let that happen. This is the opportunity right here, right now, to change this, and this is part of how this strategy can fit together.

So what are the investments out of the record budgets? And then we have got the forthcoming city deal, where we have put the high-value positions on the table through the comeback strategy, and we will draw it all together. Here is how you can actually change people's lives, here are the skills that we require and here is how we bring it together for advanced manufacturing—that is CSL and a whole host of other companies that have come in. And what do we crave? We crave independent supply chains and national sovereignty. So it is no use losing the automotive industry and then saying, 'We've got a problem: manufacturing scale'. I want to make this above partisanship but also go to the key issues that we as a nation and a state, and even at the third tier of government, the local municipality, need to come together on to just drive these projects, because this is how you make the advanced manufacturing for life-saving blood products and then vaccines. You have them against the pandemic and soon against influenza. They are all critical. Then you make sure that you take these derelict sites and you turn them around, you reinvest and you see what you can do, and you harness that opportunity. Then you have the circular economy, which we are also driving. You get the connection between the business investment and the social infrastructure, and we have got to make sure of that, because part of the history of Broadmeadows has been that the social infrastructure has lagged behind what was required. But I think that now we are well set up and we need to advance on all of those issues.

If we have a look at what the Victorian government is doing at a whole range of different levels, this affects everybody. I just want to acknowledge the minister at the table, the Minister for Crime Prevention. I work as Parliamentary Secretary for Crime Prevention with the minister. She came out recently to Banksia Gardens, and these are people whose lives have been brutalised in many different ways; they have not had much chance in life. But you should see the response you get when you are saying to them, 'Here's a chance'. As I always say, anybody from Broadmeadows only needs half a

chance—that will do. They have got the drive. They just want to know that they have got a way, and they can see that somebody has actually said, 'Here's a hand up'—they do not want a handout, they just want a hand up—and 'Here's your chance to get some training, get your life back together'. A lot of people go through major trauma in life, as we know from the inquiries, many in this house. And I know that you have done them, as I have; I just want to make that acknowledgement, Deputy Speaker. So how do you just say to them, 'Here's your way through. Here's how we can connect you to better opportunity, give you the skills, give you the training and then create the economic environment around you so that you do want to have that opportunity'?

From a place-based proposition, we want to have 20-minute cities. We want people working within their location. So when the airport comes back I want local jobs for local people. I have said to the airport—I have had an agreement with them in the past—to let us know how they are going to stage this rollout and what the skills are, what the certificates are and what we need so we get the pipeline right, and now here is the opportunity to actually get it not just with Kangan TAFE but through secondary education as well, so you see where you can live, where you can work, where you can have a better life and you have got great opportunities—and of course the pay. Now is going to be the right time—the best time—to be coming through, I would argue, probably in Victoria's history, and to have these skills. I think that is what we need to do. We need to give people some inspiration, give them the chances for all our children and the next generations, and this is why this is such an important bill.

Mr CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (12:25): It is with some pleasure that I rise this afternoon to speak on the Education and Training Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reform and Other Matters) Bill 2021. I always, when I reflect on bills like this, think about the Labor Party's DNA and our very long-term agenda of reforming this state to ensure that we are the fairest of states and that every Victorian is provided absolutely with opportunities going forward. In reflecting on this reform I think it is very important to reflect that this reform builds on a succession of reforming Labor governments in this space.

In terms of my own particular story, my family migrated from New Zealand in 1988. It was around about this time in 1988, and I did my last two or three months of primary school in Australia before going on to secondary school at the start of 1989. In that period of time we had Joan Kirner as the Minister for Education in the Cain government, which was implementing a lot of reform to improve the opportunities of people across this state. People would recall that in that period of time we really had a two-geared secondary schooling system: we had the technical high school system, which I was a very proud graduate of, and of course we had the high school system. In reflecting, certainly in the areas that I grew up in we typically found the technical high schools in the more working-class communities and the high schools in more middle-class communities. I am sure that was not uniformly the case, but certainly it was in the areas that I grew up in. I certainly do not want to put words in the former Labor education minister and then Premier Joan Kirner's mouth, but I suspect what she was seeking to do was to ensure that every student had the opportunity to achieve the maximum educational outcome to suit where they wanted to go with their lives. I think her vision was very much to break down the glass barriers that existed in our education system to provide every student with a similar set of opportunities, and we saw as a consequence of those reforms the technical high schools change. We saw the introduction—or reform, initially—of the high school certificate, the implementation then of the VCE, and then later on we saw the introduction of vocational and VCAL-style education, which provided those pathways for students who wished to go on and become tradies, to become the workers that our economy so desperately needed through that period.

I must say in some ways, despite the vision of Joan Kirner at that point in time, I am not sure that the reforms that were put in place were delivering completely on her outstanding vision for what we want to see in an education system. That is why these reforms that have been introduced by the Minister for Education after a very detailed process of consultation and collaboration with the sector are so very, very important. They will reform the system so that we have effectively one education attainment, which is the certificate that this legislation very much underpins, no matter which stream of education

you take, no matter what the ambition is of Mum and Dad or the primary caregiver or indeed the student, so that when you finish your secondary schooling you end up with a recognised certificate that does not provide a disincentive depending on the type of education.

Now, I must say, in reflecting on that journey and indeed in reflecting on the kids that I went to school with, I certainly very much want to recognise the thoughts of the member for Broadmeadows. There has never been a greater time to become a tradie, to of course assist the Andrews Labor government in delivering its massive infrastructure pipeline. Indeed I think the reforms that were put in place over the last 20 years by reforming Labor governments have seen highly skilled jobs created and those workers with the skills to be able to interact with those massive building projects that we have underway.

These reforms are actually really important. From my end it does not particularly matter if kids are great with their hands or great with their minds. The reality is if you want to be great with your hands and ultimately later on want to go on and become a tradesperson and want to own your own business, then absolutely you need to have a set of skills that enable you to successfully run a business, to do the books, to make sure that the workers on the sites that you can control are working in a safe way—that you have the skills to be able to appropriately quote for and win work for your own business and those indeed that work for you. That is why these reforms are so important. We need all of our workers to have the appropriate qualifications to be able to contribute within our economy.

From my end, as I said earlier, if you look at Labor's DNA, you very much have to consider the reforming work we have put in place over many, many decades. We are a party that wants to break down those glass ceilings that have historically existed within our community, within our state and across this country. We want to have every student that comes out of our secondary schools having the right set of skills to be able to participate successfully, to be able to earn an income, and I think these reforms very much go a long way. I am very proud of being a student that went through our public education system. I am very proud that I went to a tech high school. I know from talking to many of my colleagues in the Andrews Labor government that they had a similar pathway to this place. That is why I am so keen, and I know every single one of my Labor backbench colleagues are so keen, to see that very direct investment being made into our local public schools, because we see very clearly firsthand, every time we visit, the opportunities that are provided to those kids to get a first-class education to enable those kids to later on productively go into the economy as an adult with the set of skills to engage, to be able to work with their hands or their minds or both, as they move through their working lives.

I must say, from my end, from the things that I have witnessed as a member of Parliament I am so committed to and so proud of the investments that the Andrews Labor government has made in my public schools. I look forward to continuing to work with the Minister for Education and my backbench colleagues to deliver a reforming Labor agenda for our public education system, because I know it is so important for breaking down those glass ceilings, for giving every single boy and every single girl the best opportunity to have a well-paid job with the skills they need moving forward. I commend this legislation to the Parliament.

Ms WARD (Eltham) (12:35): It is great to come after the member for South Barwon with his passionate support for public education, as I know all of us on this side have. This government is continuing the good work that we have been doing since we were first elected in 2014 in creating the Education State with this amendment. Now, as has been discussed by a few others, it is easy for Monday's experts, for those in the gallery, to criticise teachers—you know, coming up with ideas like incentive payments for teachers when their students get high marks, trying to financially incentivise teachers to be better and better. What this does though is it misunderstands, it demeans and it disrespects the role of the teacher. Kids are their incentive—helping them to grow and to learn. That is why they are teachers. And this is not to say that I do not think teachers should be paid extraordinarily well. I think they should. Their role is incredibly important, and they need to be remunerated accordingly. They need to be remunerated based on longevity and based on commitment, but it is no good siphoning off teachers and trying to create a competition around rote learning.

It is only the ignorant who say, 'Those who can, do; those who can't, teach'. None of us would be where we are without our teachers. They are instrumental in helping us become the people that we are, helping us reach our potential and helping us see the opportunities that are available to us. In the last 20 or so months it has become incredibly clear just how hard teaching is, how hard our teachers work and how devoted they are. Our teachers over the last two years have been absolutely vital to our kids, their wellbeing and their education, and I thank our teachers for their extraordinary work throughout this pandemic.

I know firsthand how hard they have worked. I live with a teacher, a teacher who is up into the early hours of the morning—he has VCE students—who does an extraordinary amount of work to look after his kids but also to create interesting, entertaining, informative content, which becomes increasingly difficult online. Our teachers have—to use that very well-used word over the last 18 months—pivoted. They have pivoted, and they have pivoted, and they have pivoted. They have done everything they can to keep our kids engaged, and I congratulate them as well as our students on the success that we have seen with our NAPLAN results from last year. They have been leading the country.

Now, as other members here have said, the Labor Party has always led the way when it comes to education reform. We can go back only as far as Joan Kirner and the work that she undertook regarding the VCE. This move was led by the terrific Howard Kelly, a devoted and lifelong educator who continued his work on the VCE throughout the Kennett years despite the numerous and record-breaking amount of schools Premier Kennett closed and then worked under the wonderful Lynne Kosky. He led a ministerial review that led to our magnificent LLENs—and I will pause here to give a shout-out to my local LLEN, the Banyule-Nillumbik LLEN, who are just fantastic. Our local learning and employment network are incredible in the work that they do—their commitment to kids, how they just help scaffold kids through the pathways and come out with fantastic outcomes. I am incredibly grateful for the LLENs that we have, and I congratulate them on their 20th anniversaries this year. Howard's passion for education continues. He is now the director of TAFE at Parkville College. And this is what educators are. They are people who are committed. They are people who are devoted to our kids, who will do everything they can to ensure that our kids have the pathways they need.

And the Labor Party is the same. We want to make sure that there are opportunities for our kids. We want to create those pathways, and we want to have as many signposts on those pathways as possible. So as a Labor government we do not rest, we keep reforming and we keep improving, as we have seen with the earlier education reforms brought in by past Labor governments and with what we are seeing with this current Andrews Labor government. We brought in the Firth review to look at how we can continue to improve the final years of formal education in this state. Thirty-eight recommendations were made, and these amendments focus on recommendations 1 and 10. Since 2018 we have invested $315 million in senior schooling reforms, including improving careers advice and education, introducing the Head Start program and supporting and investing in VET. We want our kids to stay in formal learning. We do not want kids falling off. We do not want kids disengaging. We do not want them to feel left behind. We do not want them to feel that there is not a role for them in our education and training programs. We want to understand what they need, and we want to offer education and training support to help those kids achieve the best outcomes they can.

Different schools have had different approaches to VCAL, and I am sorry to say that some schools have chosen to just ignore it completely. Some have shoved it up the back of the school—that is where those kids will go. You know, 'We're going to really focus on the VCE kids'. And then there are those exceptional schools who have recognised the importance of the subjects and the training and the skills that VCAL offers—those schools who have done things like set up interviews with kids as to why they want to come into VCAL, who have presentation ceremonies at the end of the school year for their VCAL kids, who hold their VCAL kids up as examples of what great students can be. This is what we want to do with this amendment and what we want to do with this reform: to integrate our kids together so that they are all held up; that they are all seen to be fantastic kids; that none of them are demeaned for the subjects that they choose or the manner in which they choose to do those subjects;

and that all kids are valued, regardless of their ability, their interests, their type of learning skills or what the career is that they wish to undertake. All of our kids need to be valued.

Because of these different approaches, we have seen—a number of people have mentioned it, and I think you have as well, Deputy Speaker—that some VCAL kids have been demeaned. They have not been valued as highly as they should have been. And what was interesting to me, with the consultation work that we did in my community, leading up to the introduction of the Banyule Nillumbik Tech School, was our discussion with employers and how much employers had noted that so many kids they were seeing were not job ready, that they did not know the ins and out of a job—the requirements that were needed, the dedication that was needed, what you had to do to show that you were an interested member of the workforce and that you wanted to be good at your job. So if our kids are not job ready, there are still things we need to do as a government and there are things that we still need to do as educators to help prepare our kids for this. We have to give them the skills that are valued and needed by employers and that are helpful for our kids. We need an education system that includes vocational learning—learning options that respond to the strengths and interests of our young people.

This amendment allows us to create a vocational specialist stream in VCE, replacing VCAL and moving towards an integrated senior secondary certificate by 2025. This will incorporate the best elements of VCAL. As the member for South Barwon said, this is particularly important not only in bringing our kids together and having them all on the same field when it comes to values, if you like, but also in helping them understand the amazing pathways that are available to them with the huge amount of work that is happening now in this state. Our major projects are creating so many jobs, so many opportunities, so many traineeships and so many apprenticeships for Victorians that our schoolkids need to be aware of and need to be able to grasp with both hands, if that is what they are interested in doing. Having this integrated certificate will really help our kids understand what is there; embrace the subjects, the training and the teaching methodologies that work for them; and give them the opportunities that they deserve, because every kid should be valued and every kid should have opportunities there for them to grasp. Every school should be able to realise the potential of each kid and help tailor and help them understand subjects that suit them the best, that will help them be the best that they can be, that will help them grasp those opportunities that there are waiting for them.

My partner and I have got a daughter who will be going into year 12 in 2023, and I know that she and her friends will embrace the opportunities that will come with the way that we are transforming VCE. They will embrace the opportunities that will be presented to them at Eltham High School, which is a fabulous high school, as are all the schools in my community. They have got dedicated teachers and they have got terrific kids. They are engaged and they want to excel and they want to be the best they can, and it is through creating opportunities in schools for our kids that we will help them embrace those opportunities, that we will help them be the best that they can be and that we will help these kids. It might be a line from—I have forgotten the name of the movie now—'no kid left behind', the New Zealand film. Anyway, we do not want kids left behind. No matter how cheesy that might sound, we do not want our kids left behind. We want them to be captured, we want them to be engaged and we want them to achieve their full potential. I support the amendments.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (12:45): I rise to make a contribution on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021—it is a very substantial name with a lot of very significant changes. The bill predominately will expand the powers of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to create these new categories of foundation secondary course and foundation secondary qualifications to accommodate the new Victorian pathways certificate, and that in itself is really quite momentous. It will also facilitate the transition of a new senior secondary education certificate framework, including a new vocational major within the Victorian certificate of education. It also extends other powers within the act to facilitate all of this occurring.

I grew up on a farm. There were five of us in the family, and I think as the children grew up my parents realised very quickly that there was not enough room on the farm for everyone, even the boys. Education was seen as the pathway for all of my parent's children, all of my brothers and sisters, and so that was the journey we all went on. It was a fantastic opportunity to be given an education at a secondary level and then have access to further education, whether it be university or agricultural colleges or the like. Two of my brothers went to Dookie Agricultural College. What a fantastic institution that is, and it is great to see that Melbourne University are now reinvesting in that campus. When I was elected to Parliament seven years ago we were all very worried as to whether that fabulous institution would continue to be downgraded and not used, and I do congratulate Melbourne University on seeing the value of it and also then offering a range of courses to various levels of students who are wanting to pursue different avenues. There is the agricultural degree of course, where 50 per cent of the graduates, I understand, end up in in some sort of agribusiness, dealing in overseas trading and many different things that are very different from on-the-ground farming. There is still a lot of work in that area for many of the graduates from Dookie Agricultural College, but there is also a 12-month course for young people who want to work on a farm, who want to try it out, have some education and skills and take up the opportunity that is there.

We have seen a significant decline in the number of farm workers over recent years. A lot of that is to do with the loss of water from our region and the reduction in the number of farms—a massive reduction in the number of dairy farms since 2000 across northern Victoria. They were significant employers of young people, of workers across a range of areas. So the reduction in the number of farmers and the mechanisation now in farming have led to less people on farm in many cases, except of course during fruit and vegetable harvesting, when you need those hands on the ground to pick fruit and vegetables—and mechanisation is yet to change that.

In Shepparton we were chosen for the *Shepparton Education Plan* in 2017. I recall that in this Parliament in 2016 my first grievance debate bemoaned the fact that educational outcomes in our regional communities of Shepparton and Mooroopna were considerably below the state average. We had falling attendances, we had lack of aspiration and we had poor educational outcomes and many young people leaving school at an earlier age before they established those pathways for themselves. The *Shepparton Education Plan* was initiated, and in those early stages I do not think there was a vision of what it might be. But after a couple of years of hard work and consultation with the community, with the department and with an advisory board working with the government, the ultimate plan that the government came up with and was prepared to fund, and which I supported, was the establishment of the Greater Shepparton Secondary College, which necessitated the bringing together of the four secondary schools: Mooroopna Secondary College, which had declined from about 800 students to 300 students; McGuire College; Wanganui Park Secondary College; and Shepparton High School.

The Shepparton High School site, very close to the middle of town, was chosen for the build of the new school, and never before in our community's history has there been an investment in education such as we have seen emerge from the ground over the last 18 months—a new secondary college with nine schools within three neighbourhoods, with amazing gym facilities and with an enterprise centre. All of these things are built. The landscaping is being finished off as we speak, and all the teachers are making plans to move into this new school so that in 2022 all students will start there. It is a huge project, with so much work to be done around the logistics of bussing so many children and loading and off-loading children at school times. All these things have resulted in a huge amount of work being undertaken during the course of this year.

It is a beautiful building, but as we all know it is not just about buildings. It has been fantastic to see the excitement within the community about the new school. That is among the teachers who will have access to facilities that they truly deserve and have not had, and I would say the same about students. For the grade 6 students that are getting the opportunity to go through this school and see where they will be next year it has been truly delightful. It is jaw dropping for many of them to consider what they

will have. Having that secondary college right on the edge of town, within walking distance of La Trobe University, to our TAFE college in Fryers Street, Shepparton, and of course to the CBD area really creates an education precinct that will be connected in Shepparton, and that is something to really value.

It does toss up the fact that our TAFE college is in need of very significant upgrade and refurbishment, particularly the Fryers Street campus. It highlights also that need for one of the technical colleges that this government has been rolling out in a number of places. Bendigo has one, and we are very keen to see Shepparton have one of these high-tech technical schools accessible to all the schools in the region—all schools. For young people to be able to come in and see the technology and what the future might look like for them really fits in with the notion of this legislation. It is very much about creating pathways, whether they be pathways to university, pathways to apprenticeships, pathways to high-tech areas or pathways into our agricultural and horticultural industries.

I will just say that the Lighthouse Project in Shepparton have been working with year 9 groups and taking groups of them out to Dookie agricultural college to see what that is all about, experience it, spend a week out there on the ground and start to formulate some vision about what their future might hold, given that they are currently living in an area where agriculture and horticulture are such predominant parts of what goes on.

It was interesting to hear the member for Broadmeadows speaking about the importance of place, and I think it does raise the question of being able to be educated in your own area, to continue living in it and to not have to go a long way away to study, and that of course often prevents people from studying in regional areas. So having access to these facilities, to these pathways, right throughout secondary college will, I think, create opportunities that will encourage young people to stay at school for much longer. I am really hoping that we will see the number of young people dropping out before they complete their final year change, and the breadth of subjects that will be available to young people in these sorts of settings with the new pathways certificate as well will really create much greater opportunity.

I have noticed that there is an incredible shortage of nurses in our community at the moment, and that is also something that we provide in Shepparton.

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:55): I rise to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2021. Can I begin by thanking the students, teachers, principals, staff and parents that have delivered at-home learning over the last 20 months on and off. They have done an extraordinary job.

Before going on to talk about the specifics of the bill can I reflect on the importance of education to Victoria. In my ministerial responsibilities I have seen the importance of education for keeping young people away from the justice system. Giving young people the best education and training and keeping them engaged is the best that we can do to help them thrive through the rest of their lives. This was underscored to me recently when I joined an online round table of school principals from across the western suburbs that was convened by my colleague the member for Tarneit. Here I heard about the momentous work that our educators are doing to keep at-risk young people safe, resilient and connected. This is priceless work, and I commend them for everything that they are doing.

This is one of the guiding principles of this government's *Crime Prevention Strategy*, which has been investing in multiple projects to keep young people engaged at school. The *Crime Prevention Strategy* outlines how the government will tackle the drivers of offending before the offence occurs in order to keep Victorians safe at every stage of their lives. It is underpinned with more than $30 million worth of investments. This bill we are debating today complements that investment and focuses the Andrews Labor government on education across the government as a whole. It will create new categories of foundation secondary courses and foundation secondary qualifications to accommodate a new

Victorian pathways certificate. It will also facilitate the transition to a new senior secondary education certificate framework so that students will be able to enrol in a vocational major within VCE. This is a great achievement and a great step forward.

The bill also goes on to outline the new Victorian pathways certificate and vocational major within VCE. I know this is an important step for my community. The bill will also allow for the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority to conduct the accreditation process for the new certificate framework, facilitating an orderly transition for senior secondary providers into the new system.

Can I commend the Minister for Education, the member for Monbulk, for the extensive consultation that he has undertaken with students, employers, educators and education experts in designing and introducing these new changes. By involving students we know that these new pathways will reflect their aspirations and perspectives.

Can I also give a shout-out to all those students about to sit year 12 exams at schools such as Copperfield College, Springside West, Overnewton Anglican Community College, Taylors Lakes Secondary College, Lakeview Senior College and Keilor Downs. Can I also finally extend my best wishes to my own year 12 student, Xavier, and thank his teachers, who have been absolutely instrumental through his time at St Bernard's—Mr John Samanna, Ms Glenny, Mr Nunan, Mr Clive Haese and Mr James Toohey—for supporting him in his years. I know he looks forward to finishing up year 12 this Friday, as does my nephew Gus Sykes, who is also doing year 12. I will leave my comments there and support the bill.

Business interrupted under resolution of house of 7 October.

Members

MINISTER FOR WATER

MINISTER FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT

MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Absence

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (13:01): I rise to advise the house that I will answer questions today for the portfolios of water, police; public transport, roads and road safety; multicultural affairs, community sport and youth.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

INDEPENDENT BROAD-BASED ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (13:01): My question is to the Premier. Are Labor ministers, MPs and staff being called to give evidence to the anti-corruption commission over matters relating to internal Labor affairs having their legal costs paid by the taxpayer?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (13:02): I am not privy to who is, has been or will be called to IBAC, so on that basis I am unable to answer the question put to me.

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (13:02): Has the government put a cap on the amount of legal costs that the taxpayer will pay for ministers, MPs and staff appearing at the anti-corruption commission?

Mr Pearson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Minister for Government Services.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (13:02): I thank the member for Kew for his supplementary question. I am not entirely sure whether he heard the answer to the substantive question, but I think that answers it.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (13:02): I am delighted to be able to rise to update the house that today the Minister for Health, after decisions made last night and yesterday by the government, announced a $258.95 million investment to support our frontline health workers in the surge to deal with the increased admissions, the increased acuity of care, the big task—the massive task—that they face in providing the very best care to everybody who needs it as we deliver our road map to in turn deliver the national plan. Now, we know and understand that our nurses, our doctors, our ambulance paramedics, our cooks and cleaners and ward clerks and orderlies and the whole team across our health system do amazing work every single day. But for those who are in those patient-facing roles, for those who are under extreme pressure—and to a certain extent there is pressure across the system—not only do we say thank you, but we also have today made announcements to provide additional support by virtue of shift allowances for those who are doing extremely difficult work in unprecedented circumstances—one-in-100-year circumstances.

What we know is that they are highly skilled, highly trained people of compassion, people of absolute dedication, who have given so much over these last two years. In any year they give of themselves like very few others, if any. It is appropriate that we provide these additional allowances. I want to thank those unions who represent health workers for the very meaningful engagement that we have had, the deep engagement that we have had with them. I want to thank each of their members and beyond—those who work in our health system—for the amazing work that they are doing. As we heard from Michelle, a nurse unit manager at the ICU at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, they are always there for us, and they will be there for us. They need to know that their government is there for them now and over these next very difficult months.

INDEPENDENT BROAD-BASED ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (13:04): My question is to the Premier. Noting the member for Narre Warren North has resigned from the ministry after being adversely named in anti-corruption hearings, will the Premier stand down other ministers who are also adversely named in these anti-corruption hearings?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (13:05): I will not thank the member for Kew for that because it is simply wrong. The minister was not stood down. As a clear examination of the facts: he rang me, he resigned and that, I think, puts an end to the rather—well, I do not know what you would call that. It is simply wrong. It is simply factually wrong, as is so much from the honourable member for Kew.

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (13:05): My question is to the Premier. Have staff from the Premier's electorate, former ministerial or current Premier's office ever been used for branch-stacking operations?

The SPEAKER: Order! The supplementary question needs to relate to both the substantive question and the answer provided, so I offer the opportunity for the member for Kew to rephrase his question so that it relates to the answer and the question.

Mr T SMITH: Noting the Premier's previous answer, have staff in the Premier's office ever been used for branch-stacking operations?

The SPEAKER: Order! I rule the question out of order. It does not relate to the substantive question.

Ms Staley: On the ruling you have just made, Speaker, the point of order that I raise is that these questions are clearly to do with the anti-corruption hearings that are going on right now, and I would—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ripon has the call.

Ms Staley: There is currently a ministerial staff member on the stand at IBAC, so clearly there is an issue that staff and ministers are related here, and I just would argue that it is a legitimate question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will rule on this point of order. I am happy to take the member for Kew's point of order in a moment. So that the house is aware, supplementary questions are able to be asked:

> At the conclusion of each answer to an oral question without notice, the questioning member may ask the responding minister a supplementary question to elucidate or clarify the answer.
>
> Supplementary questions must actually and accurately relate to the original question, must relate to or arise from the answer and must not be a separate question on the same topic.

There are some key tests there for a supplementary question to meet for it to be in order, and I offered the opportunity for the member for Kew to rephrase his question.

Mr Guy: On a further point of order, Speaker, the primary question that was asked of the Premier related to the current anti-corruption hearings which are being conducted over branch stacking. The supplementary question which was asked of the Premier was in direct relation to the current inquiry, which related to the primary question over branch stacking. It even mentioned it. One is in direct correlation to the other.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition I think is correct in that the subject matter of the substantive question was the same, but as I have just read out, a supplementary question 'must not be a separate question on the same topic'. And that is what I have ruled.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (13:09): October is Mental Health Month in Australia, so I rise today to update the house on key recent investments made by the Andrews government to support the mental health and wellbeing of all Victorians during this challenging pandemic. On 14 September I was pleased to announce a $22 million package to deliver fast-tracked, tailored mental health care to those who need it. We have now delivered in total nearly $250 million in dedicated COVID-19-related mental health support since March of last year. As part of this $22 million, we have invested in 20 pop-up community mental health services across the state, with around 90 dedicated clinicians providing an additional 93 000 hours of support. I am thrilled to update the house on the roll-out of this program, specifically that we already have 11 of the 20 sites up and running and taking care of vulnerable Victorians in their time of need.

It is with huge thanks to our fantastic community health providers that we have new services operating within weeks of our announcement, a testament to the dedication and commitment of the mental health sector. As of last week, we are providing new services in Mildura, Ballarat, St Kilda, Kensington, Sunshine, Melton, Frankston, Ringwood, Shepparton, Warrnambool and Abbotsford. The remaining nine sites are almost ready to open and accept new patients, which will bring all 20 services online by the end of October. We have not stopped there. From yesterday that additional investment providing statewide coverage for the Triple P Positive Parenting Program is now up and running, ensuring that more than 20 000 families whose children are dealing with anxiety get the guidance and the support that they need. This is a government that steps up time and again to ensure the mental health and wellbeing of Victorians is front and centre of our road map out of this pandemic.

COVID-19

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (13:11): My question is to the Minister for Health. New South Wales is 70 per cent fully vaccinated and residents there are permitted to eat and drink indoors in a restaurant, pub or cafe at a density of one per 4 square metres. When Victoria reaches 70 per cent fully vaccinated, will the government permit Victorians to do the same as New South Wales?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (13:11): I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for his question. Can I congratulate the New South Wales community and people for reaching the 70 per cent double-dose figure and

acknowledge in doing so their more than I think 120-day lockdown—which started substantially before the current Victorian lockdown and which of course had the unfortunate by-product of seeding into this state, leading to our current situation of widespread community transmission, and indeed the Australian Capital Territory being in a similar position. Of course—

A member: And New Zealand.

Mr FOLEY: Indeed—and New Zealand. The Victorian government, and indeed the New South Wales government, all states and territories, have signed up through the national plan agreed by national cabinet, for how arrangements regarding each state's jurisdiction will deliver those key gateways of 70 per cent double dosed and then 80 per cent double dosed, taking into account the epidemiological conditions and the particular circumstances that apply both geographically and to a community status in each of those states. In that regard, the Victorian government's plan—which has been transparently out there for some time and is backed up by the Burnet Institute's modelling—is a safe, careful and measured process that will get us through the gateways of 70 per cent double dosed and then 80 per cent double dosed, and based on the public health advice will do so in a way that rewards Victorians for their outstanding effort. But in doing so it also will make sure that we do not put unnecessary and unreasonable demands on our public health system. In that regard not everyone agrees with that proposition. There are those who would risk inundating our public health system in how they would go about throwing open, in an unreasonable set of circumstances, those measures.

We acknowledge and congratulate the New South Wales government, the New South Wales people and the New South Wales community. I am confident that given the different timing and the different vaccination support that each of our states have received from the commonwealth that in the not-too-distant future the Victorian community will be following a not dissimilar path—but on the basis of Victorian conditions—to make sure that when we open, we reopen carefully, sustainably and safely in a way that rewards Victorians but protects our public health system.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (13:14): Given that New South Wales is following the national cabinet plan, why has Victoria chosen to break with the plan and refused to ease restrictions on vaccinated residents in the manner of New South Wales and at the time national cabinet agreed?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! If members could cease interjecting! Could I kindly ask the Leader of the Opposition to repeat the question. The minister did not hear it.

Mr GUY: Given that New South Wales is following the national cabinet plan, why has Victoria chosen to break with the national plan and refused to ease restrictions on vaccinated residents in the manner of New South Wales and at the time national cabinet agreed?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (13:15): Can I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his supplementary question. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition failed to appreciate the answer to the substantive question. Victoria is delivering in full on the national plan to reopen—the national plan which the honourable member may wish to read. The Victorian road map, together with the full release of the Burnet modelling on which the Victorian road map to reopening is based, has also been released in full. Those positions, clearly acknowledged by the commonwealth government, are full delivery of the national plan. Whether it be the Prime Minister, whether it be even the federal Treasurer or indeed the federal minister for health, they all acknowledge that each of the state jurisdictions is delivering their arrangements in accordance with the national plan in full. The Victorian government is doing precisely that.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (13:16): I rise to update the house on how the Andrews Labor government is leading the nation with the integration of vaccination certificates into

the Service Victoria app. We are asking Victorians to get ready for when the state reopens by loading their COVID-19 vaccination certificates into the updated Service Victoria app. When they check in to a cafe or a hairdresser in a few weeks time, Victorians can show two ticks at the door: one tick that they have been checked in and one tick that they have been fully vaccinated. It is as simple and as easy as that, and Victorians think it is simple and easy too. As of just a few minutes ago, around 500 000 Victorians had uploaded their certificates to the app since yesterday, and the latest advice that I have received is that the number is growing by 10 000 certificates every 10 minutes.

We know that Victorians want to get back to doing what they love, whether it be visiting a pub, a gallery or a live music event at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl. I have been working collaboratively with my state and federal colleagues to make sure this technology provides an easy customer experience for Victorians, and the feedback we received yesterday was that it takes just minutes to transfer your certificate across. The team at Service Victoria have worked tirelessly in recent times to make sure this technology was available for Victorians as quickly as possible, and I want to acknowledge and thank them for their unwavering efforts and support throughout the course of this pandemic.

The people of regional Victoria are the first to test out this technology as part of the vaccinated economy trials, and we look forward to working with venues and businesses in the coming weeks to make sure our technology and systems are good to go for when the state reopens.

COVID-19

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (13:18): My question is for the Minister for Health. Recent media reports indicate that Australia will allow 2000 overseas nurses and doctors to enter Australia for work under a plan being finalised by the commonwealth and states to ease the current healthcare staffing crisis across the country and particularly in regional areas. The Prime Minister and others have indicated that for double-vaccinated entrants to Australia home quarantine will become the quarantine solution in the near future. Minister, what steps is the Victorian government taking to facilitate overseas workers being quickly brought into Victoria, quarantined and deployed in areas of need?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (13:18): Can I thank the member for Shepparton for her question. That is a very timely contribution from the honourable member, and can I just take this opportunity to thank the honourable member for the leadership she has shown in recent times in her community in the community-led response to dealing with some very challenging circumstances in the Goulburn Valley and in Shepparton in particular.

In regard to the specific issue that she raised, yes, the Victorian government is in active consideration of that very issue, again in accordance with the processes that the national cabinet has set out. In regard to the health sector, for instance, just a few hours ago the Victorian government announced a process whereby we will be bringing forward over the next four months 1000 international arrivals in our clinical and healthcare services, bringing largely returning Australians—over 60 per cent of that 1000 will be Australian clinicians, nurses, allied health professionals and others—to Australia, together with some 400 international professionals in the same fields. That is of course to replace the pipeline that has been turned off now for some 21 months, where historically Victoria and other jurisdictions largely relied on 700 to 800 arrivals each year into our health services to ensure demand was being met. The same also applies in regard to, for instance, the agricultural workforce. Only yesterday, I am advised, in accordance with the COVID-safe plan some further Pacific Islander community delegations of agricultural workers arrived in the state through the arrangements that we have partly in place with our friends in Tasmania, bringing to some 3000 workers in that space now in the state.

Add all that together, together with other work in other specified sectors, whether it be the creative industries, whether it be specialised engineering or other sectors, as Victoria and indeed the country moves along the process of a highly vaccinated community, we are increasingly able to decouple the restrictions and the quarantine arrangements from the relatively strict 14-day hotel quarantine system to a more nuanced, risk-based system based on where individuals are coming from and their

vaccination status in doing so. We are working cooperatively with the commonwealth and with other jurisdictions precisely in the area the honourable member has mentioned, and we will have more to say about that shortly.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (13:22): You have already touched on my supplementary question, which really relates to our forthcoming fruit harvest. Arrangements are currently underway for double-vaccinated workers from Samoa to enter the country for the forthcoming harvest. They are currently destined for hotel quarantine in Tasmania at significant cost to both the Victorian government and the farmers. Will the Minister for Health advocate to the chief health officer for ongoing farm quarantine for these workers, given the rapidly changing landscape and the imminent easing of restrictions and the fact that we are moving towards a 70 per cent double-vaccinated community very shortly anyway?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (13:22): Again, can I thank the honourable member for her supplementary question. Much of the area to which the honourable member refers to has been the work under active consideration by my honourable friend the Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Agriculture, and can I thank her and her team for their active leadership in this space, which goes to the substance of the issues as opposed to, perhaps somewhat more prosaically, her federal counterpart, who seems to make announcements lacking substance—as opposed to the hard work that the honourable minister puts in to deliver on these programs. So what we now have is some 3000 workers in that system supporting Victoria's farmers across those two tranches of Solomon Islander workers that the honourable member refers to. In regard to the transition from 14-day hotel quarantine to alternative arrangements based on that risk matrix, I will undertake to make the representations the honourable member has requested. *(Time expired)*

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing, Minister for Child Protection) (13:24): I rise to update the house on the economic stimulus being created through our record-breaking investment in social and affordable housing. These investments of course include our $5.3 billion Big Housing Build, the most significant in the history of federation. They also include complementary programs such as building new homes to fight homelessness, our public housing renewal program and our new, innovative ground lease model. These initiatives were designed to provide more homes for more Victorians, to create jobs where they are needed most and to drive the economy, and this is exactly what we are doing. To date Homes Victoria has engaged 59 building companies, who have started construction on 485 sites—with 195 in metropolitan Melbourne—

Mr Walsh interjected.

Mr WYNNE: are you ready for this, member for Murray Plains?—and 290 in regional Victoria. There are now 4000 homes under construction, and 15 000 jobs are being created. To put this in perspective, Homes Victoria's funding activity is expected to be 8 to 10 per cent of the entire Victorian residential construction sector for this financial year and next. Projects recently announced under our Social Housing Growth Fund rapid round are progressing and additional builders will be appointed in the coming months. These investments have positioned Victoria to generate significant economic activity through the pandemic and beyond. Every dollar invested in social housing is an investment in Victorian people, and we continue to deliver on this record investment. Everyone deserves the dignity of a roof over their head, and I am proud to be part of an Andrews Labor government that is achieving that important social outcome.

INDEPENDENT BROAD-BASED ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (13:26): My question is to the Premier. Have staff in the Premier's office ever been used for branch-stacking operations?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (13:26): I thank the member for Kew for his question. Not that I am aware of. Staff in my office and staff across the government—

A member interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: Staff in my office work extremely hard every day of the week to support the people of this great state in the delivery of our policy agenda, whether that be removing more level crossings; not only saving TAFE from others but making it better than it has ever been, and free for so many; building literally hundreds and hundreds of new schools and upgraded schools across our community; making kinder free and accessible, and 15 hours for the vast majority of three-year-olds; or supporting our nurses and doctors and ambos and everyone across the health system—not just with record funding, record capital works investment, but also responding in the midst of a one-in-100-year event with that surge capacity allowance announced today by my honourable friend who is doing an outstanding job as Minister for Health. I can go on and on.

That is exactly what my staff do. I am not sure what the member for Kew's staff get up to, but what my staff are about is working hard every single day to deliver our commitments for the Victorian community. I am happy to go on because there are many, many more of them: suburban roads, regional roads, mental health—the biggest reform agenda in mental health in the history of this nation. You can add up pretty much every new dollar in mental health across the country and you will not get to the investment that the Treasurer put down in the budget delivered early this year. Family violence—my honourable friend the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence is here in the chamber today—not only Australia's first and only royal commission, but the full commitment to deliver every single one of those recommendations. Better attitudes towards women for better outcomes for women, safety for women and children, more support: three and a half thousand million dollars more than every other government across this country combined.

As I said, there are too many of these things to refer to, but they are all part of the precious gift given to us by the Victorian community—their trust and their mandate to get on and get things done—and that is exactly what my team and I and my staff do every day, every week, every year that we have the honour of governing and leading this state.

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (13:29): Currently former state government staffer Ellen Schreiber is giving evidence at IBAC about her participation in branch-stacking activity. Is her legal representation being paid for by the taxpayer?

Ms Allan: On a point of order, Speaker, again, the house would appreciate your guidance on how that supplementary question is relevant to the substantive question. You ruled earlier today and made very clear to the member for Kew the requirements needed to be met for supplementary questions to be in order. I suggest you rule this question out of order because it does not relate to the substantive question in an adequate way, as you have ruled just a few—probably 20—minutes earlier today in question time.

Ms Staley: On the point of order, Speaker, the original question by the member for Kew asked about ministerial staff of the Premier. All ministerial staff are employed by the Premier, so this is clearly a staff member of the Premier. It clearly relates to the original question. It also, I have got to say, talks about both the substantive and the supplementary and relates specifically to the corruption hearings that are going on.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The supplementary question I believe was relevant to the answer and the question that was asked as a substantial question.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (13:30): I thank the member for Kew for his question. I am uncertain as to the exact status of the person that the member for Kew references. I understand she was performing executive assistant functions to a then minister. I am not sure whether she was a departmental secondee, a member of administrative staff or a member of ministerial staff. However, regardless of those matters I am just making it clear I am not certain about her status. Further to the point that the member for Ripon made in relation to all ministerial staff being essentially employed by my chief of staff, right, just to that point, I am not certain about what her staffing status is.

In relation to her legal representation, the first that I was aware that she would be appearing at IBAC—I do not know that I have necessarily met her, I may have—was when I saw press reports of that happening. I am uncertain if she has legal representation in the first instance—I do not even know whether she has counsel. If she does, I am equally uncertain who is paying for them. If I could add anything to that answer, I would. *(Time expired)*

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (13:32): I am absolutely delighted to update the house on the terrific progress we are making towards building the biggest transport infrastructure project in Victoria's history that is going to support jobs, services and opportunities for people closer to where they live. Not only will this project slash travel times by up to 40 minutes for a one-way journey, depending on where you are going around the city, it will take half a million cars off the roads each and every day. It is also a project that is going to create jobs—jobs in the construction pipeline, 24 000 of them, and more than double that in the supply chain, because we know that construction jobs support a whole range of other jobs in small business, in manufacturing and in engineering right across our economy. This is also more than just a train line. As I said, it will support jobs in the precincts, better access to education and health services and also more homes for people closer to important train station locations. It is a transformative project that will change the way people move around our city and state.

It has been a very big few months for the Suburban Rail Loop. We have released the comprehensive business and investment case. We have got a tender out for initial and early works, with work to start next year. And just last week legislation passed through this Parliament. I really would like to acknowledge the members of Parliament who wholeheartedly supported this without amendment, without trying to put amendments to this important piece of legislation. There were some amendments put forward by those who oppose this project, trying to amend into the legislation their ongoing opposition to the delivery of the Suburban Rail Loop. Well, we rejected those amendments—amendments that were supported unsurprisingly by the Liberal Party and, surprisingly, by the Greens political party. Who would have thought that the Greens political party would have not wholeheartedly supported a public transport project? Well, let the record stand: only Labor will get on and deliver this vital project.

Ms Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, I refer to a number of questions which remain unanswered after the due date: question 5823 to the Minister for Health, which was due on 3 June; question 5869 to the Minister for Health, which was due on 19 June; and question 5989 to the Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, due 7 October. If you could look into those matters, I would appreciate it.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. We will follow those matters up for the member.

Bills

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM AMENDMENT (SENIOR SECONDARY PATHWAYS REFORMS AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2021

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (13:35): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Business of the house

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (13:35): I move:

That the consideration of order of the day, government business, 2, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AMENDMENT (CHILD PROTECTION) BILL 2021

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Mr PEARSON:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (13:36): I rise today to speak on the Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Child Protection) Bill 2021. This is important legislation which will help to support our vulnerable children, particularly those who have fallen through the gaps for far too long. This bill will rest upon three pillars, which are to modernise the legislative framework by decreasing over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in care, implement the Home Stretch program and shift, in some small way, from a crisis management response to one of early intervention. I think for not just members of this chamber but also the wider community we certainly see this as something that absolutely should be happening and perhaps is too late, if anything.

We know that there have been enormous issues within child protection that are just escalating over time. There has been a 150 per cent rise in children dying while in state care or being known to authorities. In fact, last year there were 65 children who died who were known to authorities. This is an absolute tragedy and a travesty for these vulnerable people, where people have gone out of their way to report that these children are at risk and where we expect that government agencies will do all that they can to support these vulnerable children, to intervene when necessary but most importantly to provide support to those families so that everybody within that family community is best equipped to make sure that they have a positive, loving and supportive household. We need to make sure that they do have a roof over their head and that they are not exposed to negative things that we see so often that translate from generation to generation in vulnerable households, whether it is about homelessness or whether it is family violence—which we know has been of enormous prevalence in the community and escalating during the coronavirus pandemic, particularly under the restrictions where kids have not been able to go to school, where workers have not been able to go to work, where some of them have lost their jobs and where people are being put under incredible mental health

pressure and they cannot connect with their friends and family members, where they may not be able to get that external support to look after their child or help through homeschooling. These are the kids that are falling through the gaps, and if nothing else our biggest priority as parliamentarians should be to make sure that every single child gets given the best possible start to life.

That comes under an enormous range of responsibilities, and I think all too often we think about it in terms of the privileges that we have been given in our own lives. I have been very, very fortunate to grow up in a loving and lovely household, to be given good role models and to be guided when I am not making good decisions in how I can make a better decision. I have been supported through my education, I have been supported to get into the workforce and I have been supported when I have been sick so that I have been able to get the medical support that I need. I have also been protected in so many ways from other things that happen in the community.

I think I am very fortunate that I was raised in the country in a rural community, where you cannot discriminate and you do not discriminate around who you engage with. The kids you go to school with are not all from that same clique of the same socio-economic bubble that you belong to. You certainly have to cut across age divides as well as ethnicity, different religions—all of those barriers are broken down and you learn to treat people with respect, to give them the respect that they deserve and to treat everybody like a human being. In some way I wish that everybody was able to be given the gift of the opportunity of being raised in a small community. That is the most important thing. Growing up in a town of 1000 people in Edenhope has certainly helped to mould me into the person that I am today.

We do need to make sure that we do have appropriate early interventions for children who are most at risk of some of the negative outcomes that happen in their life. We know that a lot of these matters can be intergenerational, and it is very, very difficult to break that cycle, and it is a challenge that governments across Australia and across the world are doing their best to try and tackle. That is why this legislation and supporting the Home Stretch program and also the recommendations of the *Our Youth, Our Way* report by the Commission for Children and Young People will help to make sure that no child is left behind and every child is given the best possible start to life.

There are a number of amendments and changes that this bill will bring into place. It will seek to incorporate further Aboriginal child placement principles in the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005; to extend the secretary's powers to provide advice and assistance if there are significant concerns for the wellbeing of an unborn child; to make amendments relating to the use of seclusion and secure welfare services; to make amendments relating to childcare agreements; to expand the information disclosure provisions in the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005; to create an offence for reprisal actions against persons who make good-faith reports or referrals; to extend time for the hearing of an application for an interim accommodation order after a child is placed in emergency care; to remove bail justice powers in relation to child protection; to amend provisions requiring certain applications and notices to be served on a child of or above 12 years of age so the application or notice must instead be served on a child of 10 years or above; to clarify the paramount considerations in case management of child protection proceedings in the family division; to prevent personal cross-examination in child protection proceedings in the family division of a witness by an unrepresented party where there is family violence or alleged family violence between that party and the witness; to amend the provisions relating to the provision of medical treatments to children who are subject to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005; to provide for the secretary to authorise a person in charge of a community care agency to act in relation to a child; to limit the circumstances in which the secretary may direct a parent to resume parental responsibility of a child under a family reunification order or a care or secretary order; to change certain terminology used in the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005; to make provision for the support of young people making a transition to adulthood; and consequently to amend the Victoria Police Act 2013 and other acts.

It is quite complex. It is quite technical in nature, what this bill covers; however, the intention is to provide a stronger framework, particularly around how we can best support our Aboriginal youth, who all too often end up in a little bit of trouble at school—that early intervention is not provided to them

and then the next thing they know, they are in court. That is certainly something that is highlighted very comprehensively in the *Our Youth, Our Way* report by the Commission for Children and Young People, and I commend all members of the house to give this a read, because it does give an impressive oversight into what is happening at the moment and how so often particularly Aboriginal children are disenfranchised from the decision-making around their care, their support and how they often enter the justice system when they should have been supported and things could have been done better to avert them from that position in their life.

I note that there are elements of this report that refer to the importance of experiences of different Aboriginal children and the positive influence that it had on them when they were reunified with their elders and they were given access to some of the traditional supports and activities of their traditional family group. And that is something that for me is great to see—that there is that linkage to some of those cultural and heritage activities of the past that otherwise might be forgotten.

I had the great privilege to work in Alice Springs for a number of years, and Darwin as well, and so have been fortunate in spending a lot of time in Aboriginal communities. I recall there was a fantastic program in one of the Aboriginal communities where they did a lot of early interventional work with kids who were really at risk of taking either that left or right pathway in life. They could go down the pathway where they were just starting to perhaps not attend school; they might have been doing some minor crimes; they might have started drinking or sniffing petrol and some of those activities that could end up with them winding up on a very negative pathway in life. The local community would identify these kids who were at risk, and they would take them out bush for a couple of weeks. They would teach them traditional tracking techniques. They would also live off the land—they would be hunting kangaroos and other wildlife, living on bush tucker for that period of time—and it really helped to reconnect those youths with their traditional culture. The results were profound in that community in that not only did it help to ensure that those youths, the future elders in that community, were strongly connected with their culture and to their land, but they were also then given that pathway of mentorship with senior people in the community, the elders, around the importance of their culture and why they need it to be preserved and they need it to be remembered and celebrated and passed on from generation to generation. So not only did it help get these kids on the right track but it also helped to preserve the culture in that community and strengthen the culture in that community.

There are certainly elements of this report from the Commission for Children and Young People which emphasise that importance of connection to culture and to community and to their land. So it is positive to see in many ways the evidence and what we know works in other areas, not just of this state but of other areas where there are Indigenous populations, and that strong culture and heritage that remain. Perhaps we can use that knowledge in Victoria to re-establish connection to culture and traditions where it otherwise may have been lost. So that is very positive, and if we can help to empower, particularly, Aboriginal children to connect to their culture, connect to the community and find value and pride in what they do and what they can contribute to their own family group, to their own Indigenous community but also the wider Victorian community, then Victoria will end up a far, far better place.

This legislation will also work towards putting into legislation the Home Stretch program. This is a really important program that provides government support for the transition to adulthood for kids that would otherwise be seen as vulnerable people who then hit that critical age group where they have gone from being in home care until 18 and all of the government supports are cut off from them. It is just like, 'Oh, well, you're at age now. Good luck. I hope we've given you enough support'. Too often that is just too early to cut loose the support that is provided from government, and too often we end up with those children becoming homeless in the years that follow. I believe that there is a really high rate particularly in the two years that follow that coming into adulthood—that the rate of homelessness really is at very, very high levels. So it is clear that we need to do more around providing that early intervention and support.

The Home Stretch program provides an accommodation allowance, casework support and flexible funding to facilitate the young person's access to education, employment and health and wellbeing

support through to the age of 21. Now, I would like to think that if that requirement needed to be continued after they turned 21, again, we would not see that as a drop-off-the-cliff point where we were not going to ever provide any financial support to that person, because there will be some people who absolutely will be well equipped to find their pathway through life and be able to do that themselves and with their own networks that they have, but there will be some that will not—and we cannot simply turn our backs on those kids and say, 'We're not willing to provide support to you anymore'. We need to make sure we can support as many people as we can, to stop people falling through the cracks, to stop them falling into the justice system and the endless cycle of that and some of the negative influences that can have on people's lives, which then influences the next generation and the next generation. So this is about breaking that cycle as much as anything else. Home Stretch is available to young people on a family reunification order, a care by secretary order or a long-term care order leaving care services from 16 years of age. So it really is making sure they have got that support from just before they turn 16—15 years and nine months—right up to their 18th birthday and then making sure that from their 18th to their 21st birthday they do have that very, very important support.

I am very proud that the Liberal and National parties were very strong on providing a framework for this reform when we were in government. We know we have not been in government a lot of the last 20 years—in fact I think we have been in government for just four of the past 21 years—so I am proud that in that time we were in government we made significant changes around this and put a framework in place to provide better support to young people. And that was particularly through the protecting vulnerable children inquiry of 2011. I will pay great credit to the then Minister for Mental Health, Mary Wooldridge, who did an amazing amount of work in this space to help protect vulnerable children. We know that stakeholders have been calling for significant legislative changes to improve that transition for young people leaving out-of-home care into adulthood and making sure they have got a roof over their head and other supports.

We have been calling for this for a very long time, as I said—that shift from providing late-stage care to early intervention to stop people from needing that later-on support, which does so much more harm to our community. From the government's perspective it costs a lot more money as well, so there is no good reason not to be moving on this as quickly as we possibly can. I refer to that number I referred to before: new reporting shows that 54 per cent of young care leavers in Victoria experience homelessness within four years—54 per cent within four years. We need to have Home Stretch, we need to have it legislated and we need to make sure it is supported so that we can support those that are most vulnerable and most prone to becoming homeless in our community.

In addition, we have got over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child protection system, which has been a longstanding issue that has only grown under the Victorian Labor government. In fact one in 10 Indigenous Victorian children is in care—one in 10 Indigenous kids in Victoria is in care. That is a higher proportion than in any other Australian jurisdiction, and it shows that we need to do so much more in that space. We need to be doing a lot to close the gap and actually make a difference, for Indigenous kids in particular but the entire Indigenous population, around closing the gap in education and closing the gap in health outcomes, to make sure that people are not homeless and, most importantly, to make sure that kids are not more likely—in fact one in 10 of them—to be in care. That is a terrible statistic and a terrible measurement of how this government is going in terms of caring for our Aboriginal children.

This government recently entered into an Aboriginal children and families agreement. I will interpret this in my best Alice Springs interpretation of Indigenous language, and I apologise to the language owner group that this relates to: Wungurilwil Gapgapduir. Part of this agreement entails facilitating autonomy and self-determination among Aboriginal groups. As part of this the bill seeks to endow Aboriginal organisations with greater power to enable Aboriginal children to be reunited with their family. This is in keeping with longstanding calls from the coalition for greater power to be handed to community agencies at the expense of the government. This is something that we wholly endorse.

In summary, this bill will seek to make a number of changes to the legislative framework which supports our children in out-of-home care, but particularly Aboriginal children. We have been calling for these changes for a very, very long time, and while we have waited a long time to see those changes, I am hopeful that with these changes in place we will reduce that horrible statistic of one in 10 Aboriginal children being in care and that we will reverse those horrible numbers of 65 children dying while they have been known by Victorian government authorities to be vulnerable. When we look at the increasing rate of children who are reported to child protection authorities, we are now up to about 120 000 children every year in Victoria. These are horrific rates, and it is clear that more needs to be done to support our children, particularly through the coronavirus pandemic, where we have seen a significant increase in the number of children who have been victims of sexual abuse and victims of family violence falling through the cracks—when they cannot go to school, when they have not got those family connections, when they cannot talk to their mates. We have even got reduced access to face-to-face supports where they feel safe, which can happen through school; it can happen through counsellors. All the counsellors in my region are currently doing things virtually, which does not work for kids who do not have access to that sort of technology.

We need to make sure we do all we can to reopen, recover and rebuild Victoria, because it is not just about getting business up and running; it is also about making sure that kids are not unnecessarily put in more harm than if they had gotten coronavirus in the first place. The statistics are showing us that the coronavirus restrictions have been incredibly damaging to a generation of children. We need to make sure that these kids are supported well into the future to make sure the mental health harms and the other violence I have spoken of can be dealt with as soon as possible, because we know that the longer that that is not dealt with, the more likelihood there is that there will be lifelong harms and lifelong support required and of course there is a far greater chance of these kids being reported to authorities, it being seen that they are vulnerable, and adding to the statistics, which are much more than just a terrible set of numbers; there is actually a child at the end of every single one of them. The Liberal-National parties support this bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (13:57): I also appreciate an opportunity, albeit a very brief one because I understand, Speaker, you are required to adjourn the chamber in just a few minutes, to contribute to the debate on this extremely important bill, the Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Child Protection) Bill 2021. When I was first elected to this place, in my inaugural speech I talked about how the thing that motivates me the most is being able to make a contribution, in all the work I have done over many decades but particularly in this place. As my grandmother once said, 'Who will speak if I don't for those who can't speak for themselves?'. Children indeed are at the very core of this, and indeed children in particular who are in difficult circumstances, vulnerable children, need all of us in this place to speak in favour of their rights and in favour of their needs and their concerns. I appreciate the comments of the member for Lowan and the indication that those opposite will also support this bill.

This bill is vitally important in ensuring the utmost level of care, connection and support in our system to protect vulnerable children in the Victorian community. The bill will progress the Victorian government's *Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children*, a road map that establishes a blueprint for transforming the child and family system in our state from one that is about crisis response to earlier interventions and prevention. This road map is part of our continuous effort to protect young people, to reduce vulnerability and to work to ensure that all children can reach their full potential, no matter what their postcode is, no matter what their background is and no matter what their start in life is. Our child protection system, alongside the education and health systems, needs to be equipped with the appropriate legislation, the appropriate resources, the workforce, the services and the tailored supports that will keep our children safe and that will strengthen families and strengthen communities. Every Victorian needs to be supported to live a healthy, fulfilled childhood, adolescence and young adulthood, backed by an excellent education—a journey that is one of hope and a journey that is one of opportunity.

This system needs consistent review, reform and modernisation to lift children and families up and to ensure that no-one is at risk of falling behind, and the system must also continuously work to respond to all communities, especially those that are most at risk. We must work to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care, prioritise self-determination and facilitate Aboriginal models of care delivered by Aboriginal community controlled organisations. We all can attest to the positive impact of diversity in Victoria and that it is our cultural differences that make us stronger.

Business interrupted under resolution of house of 7 October.

The SPEAKER: Order! I might interrupt the member at that point because I am required to interrupt business under the resolution of the house. The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 2.00 pm.

Members statements

Following statements incorporated in accordance with resolution of house of 7 October:

STATE BASKETBALL CENTRE

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater)

Work has started on the new home of basketball in Australia in Wantirna South with a project that will take the game in Victoria to a new level for elite and community players in basketball and gymnastics.

Construction on the $132 million upgrade and expansion of the centre has now begun and will mean better facilities for locals and more capacity for basketball and gymnastics to grow into the future.

The Andrews Labor government has committed $105 million for the project and the redevelopment will deliver:

- high-performance facilities for the WNBL Deakin Melbourne Boomers and NBL South East Melbourne Phoenix;
- 12 new indoor courts for local competitions and state-wide championships—taking the total number of indoor courts to 18;
- an administrative base for the Boomers and Phoenix along with Basketball Australia, Basketball Victoria and Knox Basketball;
- a regional state-of-the-art gymnastics facility;
- a new cafe and stunning town square.

Once completed in 2023, the centre will host up to 2 million visitors a year. I'm proud we're backing in sport locally!

BAYSWATER ELECTORATE SPORTING CLUBS

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater)

Thanks to our local winter tenants clubs.

Our local sporting community are a massive part of the lifeblood of our community.

This year was another challenging year and in particular for winter tenants like football, netball, rugby league and soccer, among others.

Whilst they were able to get a good chunk of the season in, it wasn't quite the end anyone had hoped for.

I wanted to take this opportunity to say a big thankyou to all of the clubs, to their volunteers, to their community for everything you do to help get kids and people of all ages and abilities onto the pitch, court or field.

Next year will of course be a very different year and I can't wait to see you all back doing what you love.

And of course, looking forward to community sport coming back very soon in line with our targets.

ROTARY CLUB OF BAYSWATER

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater)

It had been a while between drinks but again great to catch up with my friends at the Rotary Club of Bayswater!

Throughout it all they've managed to still catch up and play an active role in supporting our community, which has never been more important.

It was great to be able to talk to them about local mental health initiatives and how our local community are tracking.

I'm so proud to have fantastic local groups like Baysie Rotary doing great work in our patch.

KINGLAKE ART SHOW

Ms McLEISH (Eildon)

It was a pleasure to attend via Zoom the Kinglake Ranges 10th art show official opening last Friday night, and their first virtual show.

In the face of so much adversity, and at a time where so many events have been cancelled due to COVID and the ongoing lockdowns, the Rotary Club of Kinglake Ranges persisted and did a tremendous job organising and executing the event online. The art show has a record number of exhibitors and displays 531 artworks from various artists across Australia including Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, the ACT and of course Victoria. Congratulations to local winners of the 2021 Kinglake Art Show; Julie Van der Eynden from Kinglake, who was awarded first place in the single and mixed media division for her mosaic *Mirror*, which caught everyone's attention for the level of detail and creativity. Nikki Collie from Kinglake took home second place for her piece *Jack's Dinosaurs* in textiles. I hear the Rotary club is planning to incorporate a virtual show along with their in-person show held at the Kinglake Community Centre for 2022. An event we will all look forward to. Well done to all the artists involved and the Rotary club for such a successful event.

EILDON ELECTORATE EVENTS

Ms McLEISH (Eildon)

The Liberal Nationals have announced a comprehensive new plan to reopen and rebuild Victoria's events industry. Victorians have suffered 254 days of lockdown—the most anywhere in the world. Countless local festivals, weddings, school fetes, celebrations and corporate events have been cancelled with no clear return date in sight. Victoria's events industry normally employs roughly 70,000 people, runs more than 12,000 events a year and contributes over $12 billion a year to the economy.

Tourism and events play a large part in the Eildon electorate and are critical for local economies. Areas further from Melbourne rely on a series of events to bring people to the area for a weekend or several days.

A sample of events held in my electorate are the Alexandra truck show, Alexandra and Merrijig rodeos, Jamieson Autumn Festival, Mansfield High Country Festival, Marysville jazz and blues weekend and Kinglake Country Fair—rejuvenated a few years ago. Closer to Melbourne food and wine festivals, such as grape grazing, have been extremely beneficial in showcasing local wines and the beautiful Yarra Valley, as have music and art festivals in Healesville and Warburton. Wedding expos are held at the Yarra Valley racecourse in Yarra Glen. The River Folk Festival in Warburton scheduled later this month is another casualty.

Many events are run by volunteers who have limited finances. For them COVID has created huge uncertainty and a lack of confidence in putting on events. They need certainty to run their events and know they will not lose money if the government forces them to cancel or postpone. I have heard of too many losses in the industry and an insurance scheme to cover losses in the event of a COVID cancellation is imperative going forward. Such a scheme should have been in place all year.

That's why the Liberal National's Local Events Recovery Plan includes:

- $140 million to establish a local events insurance scheme to cover the cost of the potential cancellation of events from $20 000 up to $10 million.
- $150 million for a new local events attraction fund to assist the events industry to attract and restart local events. Twenty million dollars of this fund will be allocated to regional and rural events.
- $10 million towards a new local events safety fund to assist industry stakeholders, businesses and local organisations to plan and deliver COVID-safe events.

This is our plan to support event operators to reopen, recover and rebuild the events industry. The state government underpinning this plan will give event operators the safety net and confidence they need to proceed with events and get their deposit money back if need be.

MELBOURNE FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr FOWLES (Burwood)

It's a grand old flag, it's a high-flying flag,
It's the emblem for me and for you,
It's the emblem of the team we love,
The team of the Red and the Blue.
Every heart beats true, for the Red and the Blue,

And we sing this song to you,
Should old acquaintance be forgot,
Keep your eye on the Red and the Blue.
Oh, the team played fine in the year thirty-nine,
We're the Demons that no one can lick,
And you'll find us there at the final bell,
With the spirit of twenty-six.
Every heart beats true, for the Red and the Blue,
And we sing this song to you,
Should old acquaintance be forgot,
Keep your eye on the Red and the Blue.

COVID-19

Ms RYAN (Euroa)

Without a tier 1 exposure site in the Mitchell shire, the government must release Mitchell shire from lockdown and allow the return of all students to schools.

There are huge problems with the government's return-to-school plan, which is supposed to see regional students return on October 26 and metropolitan and restricted areas like Mitchell shire return on November 5.

I am particularly concerned about the stress placed on families in the Mitchell shire and the lack of nuance in the staggered return-to-school model.

There are multiple primary schools in my electorate with less than 100 pupils, such as Tallarook, Tooborac and Pyalong. Some of the classrooms in these schools encompass three year levels. This means the government's staggered return will see teachers juggling the demands of remote learning whilst also trying to teach in the classroom.

In contrast to this, over 100 year 12s at Seymour College have been allowed to attend school since last term despite the increased risks of COVID that correlate with age.

Small primary schools like Pyalong, Tallarook and Tooborac should be able to operate as normal. Keeping kids out of the classroom is doing untold damage—not just to learning but to the mental health of young people.

The number of children presenting to hospitals due to mental health concerns has increased considerably through the pandemic, which can be attributed in part to the social interaction and mental stimulation schools provide in person, which has been denied to children.

Despite the government's decisions having such an impact on children they recently blocked basic reforms that would have allowed for a welcome influx of counsellors into school settings.

I have been actively campaigning for children to return to classrooms for months. The Murdoch Children's Research Institute's research shows schools pose an incredibly low risk to the safety of children when compared with the mental health harm of staying away from school.

Moreover, the government must come clean with us about why they are keeping Mitchell shire in lockdown with no tier 1 exposure sites across the shire.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree)

Last Sunday, Mount Rowan Secondary College in Wendouree hosted one of the state's first pop-up vaccination clinics as the Andrews Labor government focuses on increasing vaccination rates in 100 priority postcodes across Victoria.

This targeted campaign is ensuring that we achieve equitable vaccine coverages in all communities, and pop-up clinics like this make it easy and convenient for people to get vaccinated close to home and in a place where they feel comfortable.

I thank the more than 300 people who came to the clinic to get their jab, including Tara Hills and Ash and Chloe Blackburn

Our schools are the heart of the Wendouree community, so it just makes sense for government to partner with schools and local health services to increase vaccination rates—particularly among local students and their families.

A huge thanks to Mount Rowan principal Seona Murnane and Yuille Park P–8 Community College principal Brett Shillito for their great work in promoting and supporting this clinic. It was evident that seeing a familiar face made a real difference to the many members of the schools' communities who came along to get vaccinated.

Well done also to everyone at Ballarat Health Services for the incredibly professional and smooth operation of the clinic, and for creating such a safe and supportive environment for the community. It was also great to meet a number of ACU bachelor of nursing students who were working at the pop-up clinic and the friendly security staff.

I look forward to Ballarat Health Services returning to Mount Rowan Secondary College in three weeks time, on Sunday, 31 October, to administer second doses to everyone who received their first jab on Sunday.

STABLE ONE

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn)

It is with pleasure that I pay tribute to the incredible work and tireless efforts of Stable One, ably led by managing director and board chair Jenny Willetts. Stable One has been a tremendous initiative of at least 12 local churches, of a variety of denominations, working together to provide winter shelters in Lilydale district and the Yarra Valley, offering accommodation and home-cooked meals to vulnerable people in our community experiencing homelessness, to make a practical difference in their lives, and to share the love of God. This has inspired new winter shelters in other Victorian communities too.

With the success of the Winter Night Shelter, Jenny and her team of dedicated and hardworking volunteers created The Lodge in Launching Place. I was privileged to be part of the advisory committee in the early stages, supporting Stable One's vision to create a safe place, keeping focus to 'care, connect and empower people experiencing homelessness'.

Regrettably, the COVID-19 pandemic and burdens of the Andrews government's enduring lockdown restrictions had significant and unexpected impacts for Stable One's activities. Some lodgers struggled with mandated restrictions and because of risks to others they could not stay long term. Also, the restrictions on volunteers inhibited the ability to facilitate activities.

Sadly, The Lodge will close its doors by the end of this year. However, it is vital we celebrate the lives of the many vulnerable people that have benefited from more than 80 weeks of supported accommodation at The Lodge and the contribution of staff and volunteers, who have gone above and beyond during a pandemic and harsh lockdown.

Stable One is truly marvellous, and their work highlights the ongoing need for safe and stable accommodation options locally and across Victoria as a pathway out of homelessness.

SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn)

Today, I rise to commend one of Hawthorn's local institutions, Swinburne University, that contributes so much to my electorate and indeed the broader city of Melbourne and our state.

Swinburne is a genuine modern university ensconced in the inner east of Melbourne. It strikes a good educational balance between the academic and vocational. In non-COVID times, the campus is heaving with activity and a welcome space for our multicultural community. It's a university focused on real-world benefits.

To that end, the government has partnered with them on a number of initiatives, including a project that forms part of the building safer communities program. This project focuses on building the confidence and capability of Pasifika secondary students so they can work towards a positive future and avoid potential barriers. As a former principal, this initiative resonates strongly with me.

The government is also helping to fund MedTechVic at Swinburne to design high-tech solutions to everyday challenges for Victorians with a disability. Among the first projects is a locally made, lightweight, portable ramp attached to wheelchairs to increase a user's mobility. In total the project will create 98 jobs.

Swinburne is achieving positive outcomes for its students, with its research and for the broader community.

BRUNSWICK ELECTORATE ROADS

Dr READ (Brunswick)

Moreland council is waiting on approval from the state government to reduce speed limits on local roads to 40 kilometres per hour. These are generally narrow roads lined with houses, where kids kick the footy and people walk or ride bikes as much as they drive. Most of the busier high streets nearby already have 40 kilometre per hour speed limits, leaving the back streets with a paradoxically higher limit of 50 kilometres per hour.

I understand the Department of Transport is looking at this, and I urge them to fix it as soon as possible for two reasons. First, lower speeds make the roads and our neighbourhood safer and quieter. Secondly, slowing car traffic reduces carbon emissions directly by reducing fuel consumption and indirectly by allowing people to feel safer walking and riding bikes. In turn, more residents will feel encouraged to leave their car at home and walk or ride to wherever they're going. Lowering speed limits is a key part of promoting active transport, reducing congestion and cutting carbon emissions in our climate crisis.

There is a sharp increase in the probability of serious injury if a car hits a pedestrian at 40 kilometres per hour compared to 30 kilometres per hour. For this reason and to reduce emissions, I support further speed limit reductions to 30 kilometres per hour in residential streets. I call on the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to reduce these speed limits wherever possible.

INTERNATIONAL PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit)

- Today I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge that this month is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, and that Friday is International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day.
- It's a time of acknowledgement, for the pain and grief felt by parents who endure the loss of a child.
- In Australia each year, around 110 000 Australians miscarry. Another 2200 endure the pain of stillbirth, and 600 lose their baby in the first four weeks after they're born.
- It's a time for those parents, parents like me and my husband, Scott, to talk about that pain and loss that we've felt.
- This Friday, we would have had the annual Walk to Remember, where my husband and I would join and march with other parents in our shoes and pay tribute to our children who can't be with us in person but remain ever present in our hearts.
- And I want to acknowledge and thank the work of SANDS, SIDS and Kids Victoria and Red Nose for their work and support in this space.
- Whilst unfortunately we can't march in person, I will be attending the virtual event this Sunday, and on Friday, my husband and I will be lighting a candle for our daughter Viviene and for the thousands of families around the country that are just like ours.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South)

After just over two years of administrators in charge, ballot papers are arriving in letterboxes for the election of new councillors at the Shire of South Gippsland.

The election, which is by postal ballot which must be in the mail by 22 October, is a chance for a fresh start after the chaos of the previous council, which was dismissed by this Parliament in 2019.

While I strongly supported that decision, I did so with a heavy heart, as one never wishes to see local democracy curtailed.

Now is the chance for local residents and ratepayers to start anew. There are some excellent candidates in the three wards, giving good choice to all voters. I thank all candidates for stepping forward to take part in local democracy.

It is not my practice to recommend how residents should vote.

But I do hope that people will remember the chaos and dysfunction of the previous council, including those councillors who were only there for a short time but who were also the target of criticism by the commission of inquiry, especially over the appointment of a CEO shortly before the council was dismissed.

We do not need any of the dismissed councillors re-elected. We must put the division, discord and conflict behind us.

I also caution voters to carefully consider the topics candidates are campaigning on or making promises about. Councils have a clear role to support their communities and provide local infrastructure and services—they should not be distracted on national and international political causes that are beyond their remit.

Vote for candidates who will be focused on roads, rubbish and rates, not those grandstanding on political topics, or seeking to rewrite history.

NATIONAL CARERS WEEK

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe)

It's National Carers Week. This is such an important time to come together and reflect, acknowledge and celebrate carers and the unpaid support they provide to their loved ones.

There are more than 239 000 primary carers in Victoria and around 740 000 in carer families and 2.65 million carers across the country.

Every carer is unique and has their own caring story and circumstances.

Some provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental health condition, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail aged—anyone at any time can become a carer.

This week is about celebrating carers and the important role they play.

This year's National Carers Week theme is 'Millions of reasons to care'. It aims to bring attention to the millions of carers around the country and paint an authentic picture of caring in Australia and raise community awareness among all Australians about the diversity of carers and their caring roles.

I couldn't think of a more fitting theme for the millions of carers across Australia and indeed Victoria who provide care for those they love each and every day.

COVID-19 has been a tough time for us all.

But particularly for those caring for others. Life for so many has been turned upside down.

I would like to thank all carers for their commitment as we have navigated this pandemic.

Your resilience and perseverance has been outstanding.

Carers spend so much time and energy caring for others but we know often have trouble finding the time and energy to care for themselves as well.

The Andrews Labor government recognises the efforts of all carers.

That's why we are providing additional support to carers through additional respite funding, funding for local and statewide grants and concessional and free public transport during carers week through the Carer Card program.

The Support for Carers Program is there too. Our government's Victorian Carer Strategy is backed by a $49.5 million investment in our carers and critical respite funding.

FEDERATION UNIVERSITY GIPPSLAND BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr NORTHE (Morwell)

The annual Federation University Gippsland Business Awards were hosted virtually last Friday evening, and I wish to commend and congratulate all businesses who were nominated for these prestigious awards. It has been an incredibly challenging 20 months or so given the impacts COVID restrictions have had upon many sectors and industries. It's important as a community we recognise business resilience, success and diversity, and the Gippsland Business Awards are one such forum in which we are able to do that.

I commend Moe's TM&H Mitre 10, who took out the top honour in being named Gippsland Business of the Year, which is a great achievement for this longstanding local business. Congratulations to James and Laura and all the team at TM&H Mitre 10 on being bestowed with such an honour, and I'm sure they will be incredibly proud of their success given the quality of business finalists. From a Morwell electorate perspective, O'Connor's Transport, Morwell, was inducted into the hall of fame, which is a terrific accolade to John and all the crew at O'Connor's Transport, who have been an iconic part of our local business community for a long period of time.

In the new business category, Regional Migration Australia, Traralgon, took out highest honours. This business has evolved substantially as it moved to a remote working model which included the transition to

working from home-based offices, moving to a paperless system and adopting a cloud-based app to manage all business processes. Well done to Kristie and Trish and all at Regional Migration Australia.

Wyncity Morwell, Morwell, were announced as winners in the tourism activities and attractions category. Wyncity has undergone a significant transformation with a whole variety of activities offered to persons of all ages. This includes tenpin bowling, arcade games, bumper cars, laser tag, minigolf, and as a cafe and a birthday party venue. To Warren and everyone at Wyncity, congratulations on your success.

And to our other local finalists across various categories: Bridges on Argyle motel, Traralgon; Embrace Fitness and Wellbeing (EFW), Morwell; Laser Clinics Australia, Traralgon; Pro Draft Pty Ltd, Morwell; RGM, Drouin, Moe and Traralgon; Dani McLennan Occupational Therapy, Traralgon; Stellina, Traralgon; Liz Fleming The Efficiency Coach, Traralgon; and Geek Heaven, Traralgon, we say well done on your outstanding achievements and continued success in what has been an uncertain time. All the abovementioned businesses and more not only provide important services in our local community, they employ local people and invariably also provide support to our local schools, sporting and recreation clubs and community organisations. We are blessed to have such a high calibre of people owning and operating businesses in our community.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown)

I rise today to acknowledge and thank the commitment and hard work of healthcare workers and GPs in my electorate of Thomastown.

Recently we reached out to several doctors in the electorate who generously volunteered their time to create videos informing the public of the COVID-19 vaccines and the importance of protecting ourselves, our loved ones and our society.

We are very lucky to have a strong and rich multicultural neighbourhood, and our doctors reflect this diversity. They have participated in our video campaign, providing information in several languages including English, Macedonian, Arabic, Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi.

A special thanks to Dr Ahmar, principal cardiologist, Central Melbourne Cardiology; Dr Baldi, Lalor Clinic; Dr Manasi Deshpande, Mernda Village Medical; Dr Shakir, Vital Medical Centre: Ms Athina Kaur, pharmacist; Dr Tran, Maple Leaf Medical Centre: and Dr Romas, Rochdale Medical Centre, for their willingness to help in the creation of these informative videos. On behalf of residents I congratulate you all and very much appreciate your assistance and dedication in encouraging our community to get vaccinated and your unwavering resolve to keep us safe in these difficult times.

Additionally, I'd like to extend my gratitude to John Balazs of Prima Lux Films for his services and professionalism. He is a great filmmaker from our electorate and is definitely a first-class videographer.

As we return to a sense of normality, we must continue ensuring we protect ourselves and our loved ones from COVID-19, which is why getting vaccinated is more important than ever.

BREAST SCREENING

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill)

I recently received a petition containing the signatures of 159 Victorians, predominantly residents of the Forest Hill district. This petition calls on the government to reverse Labor's cuts to Victoria's breast screening program. It highlighted the dreadful situation of the Andrews government failing to fully reinstate funding for health protection services, which will result in there being 29 000 fewer Victorian women having the ability to access a breast screen service. Due to a minor technical issue, I am unable to table this petition but now record the purpose and importance of this issue in the parliamentary record.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill)

The introduction of the vaccination mandate for authorised workers commencing this Friday is causing untold stress and other harms out in the community. I have been contacted by countless Victorians who, for whatever reason, either cannot or will not be vaccinated before Friday and are about to lose their jobs. For example, I was speaking to a local primary school teacher last week, and this person was uncomfortable about having the vaccine. After a lifetime of faithful service, this teacher was about to be sacked for no real reason. I place on record my concern that the Victorian government will be on the receiving end of thousands of unfair dismissal claims in due course. This will be yet another financial disaster initiated by this completely incompetent government.

The Premier needs to understand the pain he is causing out in the community by introducing this widespread vaccination mandate. I am well aware of numerous teachers and nurses who will be sacked on Friday, not to mention other workers from a range of vocations. Sadly, the results of this could well be the potential collapse of the education and nursing systems, or at least massive interruption and strain. With vaccination rates continuing to rise quickly, there is no need for the harsh and unfair mandate that the Premier announced on 1 October 2021. Rather this is arguably the action of a dictator who is desperate to see people comply with his ongoing decrees.

Forest Hill residents continue to contact me very concerned about various COVID-19 restrictions currently in place—for example, the current curfew. We know from the court case last year that there is no health advice to require this—rather it is just yet another form of relentless control over Victorians by this government. Similarly, the travel limits—why won't the government disclose the health advice that allegedly forms the basis of this unprecedented control measure?

With COVID-19 case numbers and hospitalisation levels running at record levels, the economy being virtually destroyed, businesses disappearing on a daily basis, stress at unprecedented levels, loneliness at epidemic proportions, children's education being for many irreparably damaged, mental health issues at record levels and countless other negative outcomes, the Victorian government needs to acknowledge its gross mismanagement of the COVID-19 situation, apologise to all Victorians and look to other jurisdictions such as New South Wales to see what it should be doing to get Victoria out of the current mess.

SUNBURY LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL

Mr J BULL (Sunbury)

The Andrews Labor government is getting on with removing the Sunbury level crossing—getting on with creating jobs, boosting our economy and delivering improvements to transport infrastructure for the benefit of locals now and into the future.

Last week the massive 110-tonne piling rig arrived.

In the coming months the Sunbury community will see this massive rig digging and a huge crane lifting the steel cages into the holes.

New shared user paths will be built either side of the road that locals can drive, ride, walk and run under. This careful planning is all about making Sunbury safer and less congested for everyone, no matter what your mode of transport.

This Sunbury level crossing removal is one of many projects happening on the Sunbury line which will see more trains run more often.

Many people speak with me about increasing the frequency of our local train service, and the huge upgrade to our line, with brand new high-capacity trains running frequently, will deliver the community an amazing service.

I extend my thanks to the team delivering the project and everyone in our community for being patient during construction.

SUNBURY BUS INTERCHANGE

Mr J BULL (Sunbury)

Another terrific project that the Andrews Labor government is getting on with delivering in my electorate is the Sunbury station bus interchange redevelopment.

In the 2021–22 Victorian state budget $3.22 million was allocated for the redevelopment of the Sunbury station bus interchange.

The next step is to engage and consult with the local community about how this funding commitment can be best spent and what improvements should be the priority.

My local youth advisory council have been working hard to put together a community survey, which provides every resident in Sunbury along with surrounding suburbs and townships with an opportunity to have their say on the project.

I'd like to extend my thanks to my youth advisory council, who have shown dedication and determination to remain active and engaged in their roles despite all the challenges the pandemic has brought on for everyone.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale)

I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the United Nations International Day of the Girl Child.

In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly agreed to declare 11 October International Day of the Girl Child in order to recognise both the rights of girls as well as their unique challenges throughout our world. Ten years later the International Day of the Girl Child is as important as ever.

And as a mother of a girl child I feel this acutely.

Much has been achieved—not least by girl children themselves. But there remains so much more to do.

Across the world, girl children and their advocates have fought all types of abuse. Not only have they fought for the very right to live, but they have fought against child labour, child trafficking, child marriage, child mutilation and other forms of abuse.

Across the world, girl children and their advocates have fought for equal opportunity—at home, in care, in education and in work (or for the right not to work).

And across the world, girl children and their advocates are proving that girls are strong, powerful, bold, fast, creative, clever, smart, kind. They are proving that girl children are special. My girl child—Patricia—proves this to me every day.

As do the thousands of girl children in and around my electorate of Pascoe Vale. In local childcare centres, kindergartens and schools, in local sporting clubs and community groups, I meet girl children every day who inspire me.

And whilst there is always more that can be done, I am so proud to be a part of a government that is striving to ensure gender equality through legislation, through budgeting and through state government services and programs.

The Andrews Labor government is promoting gender equality in education, in care, in employment, in justice, in sport and recreation and in other types of economic and social organisation.

In 2021 this important day of recognition observes the theme 'Digital generation. Our generation', a theme that encompasses the global call for equality in internet and digital device access. It also shines a light on the need for safe and secure internet and digital device access. Our society has continually promoted the rise of the digital economy; we have a responsibility to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to use it—safely and securely—not least our girl children, so that every girl child has every opportunity to achieve their full potential.

MELTON ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr McGHIE (Melton)

As Victorians pull together and fight COVID through getting vaccinated, we are seeing *Victoria's Roadmap: Delivering the National Plan* being implemented.

Staged return to onsite learning for schools has already begun for term 4, and the parents and students can't wait!

I wanted to thank all of the fantastic educators and school staff for the amazing effort that they have made supporting our students as they have learnt from home and now preparing for their students to return to class in person.

The challenges that our educators and students have faced have been significant, and they have all met those challenges head-on.

We have seen students sit the GAT last week, and our senior students are preparing for their exams.

Thank you to all those educators preparing our students.

Some of those Melton educators have recently been recognised as finalists in the 2021 Victorian Education Excellence Awards.

Tiffany Thomas from Melton Primary School is a finalist in the outstanding early career primary teacher category.

The team at Arnolds Creek Primary School are finalists in the outstanding school improvement category.

Their team includes Frank Pawlowicz, principal; Matt Finn, assistant principal; Karen Calleja, assistant principal; Ben Velden, learning specialist; Sarah Failli, teaching and learning coach; Morgan Abela, teaching and learning coach; Kaitlyn Foley, teaching and learning coach; and Elisha Squires, business manager.

I rang to congratulate all Melton finalists on their nomination and wanted to take this opportunity to recognise their efforts in this house.

The Melton electorate has also been celebrating our longest-serving teachers through the Recognition of Service to Victorian Education program.

Karen Guest at Melton Primary School and Jennifer Dockeary at Melton South Primary School have both been recognised recently for their dedication and hard work for Melton and Victorian students.

I'm sure all parents and students join me in appreciation of all our fantastic educators especially in these unprecedented times.

COVID-19

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum)

This lockdown really has felt like the toughest so far. It's been hard—on local families, neighbours, local businesses, everyday people just trying their best to get through all of this.

But it's important to mention and acknowledge the thoughtfulness, compassion and generosity of so many people too. We really have seen such wonderful and inspiring acts of kindness: little anonymous notes and flowers left in mailboxes; freshly baked biscuits left at the front door; food deliveries made to neighbours who have been in quarantine; pay-it-forward coffees at local cafes (even 'pay-it-backward' meals at the local McDonald's drive through); pop-up street libraries and seed banks; free lemons and oranges; local takeaways offering free food to people in need; neighbours mowing their neighbour's nature strip or taking in the neighbour's bins; residents reaching out across local noticeboards on social media—to show support for local businesses or even just to lend an ear or hold a virtual hand to help someone feel less alone.

Local residents are slowing down, taking the time to smile and say hello as they cross paths on their daily walks; stopping for a chat, or a pat (there are so many puppies), and asking each other—and I mean really asking each other—'How are you?'.

These might be difficult times. But in these difficult times I can honestly say there is no place I'd rather be.

So thank you—to each and every one of you—for showing such kindness and kind-heartedness throughout all of this. We have a wonderful community. And for that I am immensely grateful and so very, very proud.

MONT ALBERT TRAIN STATION

Mr HAMER (Box Hill)

I wish to place on record my thanks to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure for listening to my community and ensuring that the historic Mont Albert station building is returned to the Mont Albert village as part of the work to remove the level crossings at Union Road, Surrey Hills, and Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert.

This heritage-listed building is the heart and soul of the local Mont Albert community. The Mont Albert station opened in 1890, with the current Mont Albert station building constructed in 1911, around the same time the first shops in the Hamilton Street village were established.

Over the years, the station building's surrounds have been carefully tended to by a group of dedicated local volunteers. The Mont Albert stationeers have committed their time and resources to maintaining and protecting the station for the benefit of all in the local community who use it.

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of meeting one of its former members (and one-time local butcher) Mr Martin Hopkins, who showed me a fine historical account of Mont Albert and the work of its stationeers.

I want to thank the stationeers and all those in our community who supported the campaign to return this historic building to the village. Thanks to this support, this fine building will continue to be a focal point for the Mont Albert village for many years to come.

BROADMEADOWS REVITALISATION BOARD

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows)

The next city deal provides a unique opportunity that must be seized. Broadmeadows is the epicentre providing the highest priorities Australia craves. It has earned the right to be priority one in the proposed north-west Melbourne city deal because it connects nation-building infrastructure; links independent supply

chains for national sovereignty by manufacturing life-saving vaccines against the pandemic and in the future influenza, lucrative export industries; and adds value to the rail link to Melbourne Airport in a community that has attracted an estimated $1 billion in business investments expected to produce more than 5000 jobs. The Comeback strategy I wrote, and which the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board 4.0 has unanimously endorsed, defines such projects of national, state and regional significance.

They are vital and urgent and deliver high-value return for Australia's recovery. After my advocacy in December 2020, Prime Minister Scott Morrison forwarded the comeback strategy to his minister with responsibility for city deals, Paul Fletcher.

The pandemic stalks inequality. It defines how our lives and livelihoods are intertwined. Australia will not have to import nurses if we train our own, especially from the communities where we need them most, preventing lockdowns costing Victoria and NSW $1 billion each weekly and avoiding Einstein's definition of insanity.

We must leverage the Victorian government's $60 million investment in the last state budget providing a landmark partnership for skills and training to connect local people to emerging jobs.

Stage 1of the Kangan Institute redevelopment sees the construction of the Broadmeadows Health and Community Centre of Excellence. This investment is a shovel-ready project to provide training in health and community services, driven by technology to meet the need for skills in Melbourne's north. It adds to the $5.5 million earlier investment for a sustainable plumbing centre and other construction skills.

The Broadmeadows Health and Community Centre of excellence provides the training and skills for jobs with the Northern Hospital, where a children's emergency department will be constructed as part of a budget package worth $100 million. As chair of the BRB 4.0, I have established Broadmeadows as a prototype for economic and social recovery by attracting investments, creating jobs, facilitating community development and harvesting benefits for local families. This plan and collaborations have delivered major investments for new industries in modern manufacturing, the circular economy, green-collar jobs, nursing and mental health. The investment attraction strategy features:

- Advancing manufacturing for life-saving blood products and vaccines in Melbourne's north: CSL is manufacturing more than 50 million vaccines against COVID-19 in its Broadmeadows facility. CSL is a contender to manufacture the mRNA vaccines the Australian government has defined as a national imperative and the Victorian government has allocated $50 million to secure locally. Another company, Upkara, has presented new technology that means mRNA vaccines do not need to be frozen to the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board 4.0. This breakthrough technology presents the opportunity for another international export industry and has been forwarded to the Victorian and Australian governments for due diligence.
- Modern manufacturing is returning to the derelict Ford site: work has begun on the proposed $500 million redevelopment, less than five years after Ford's iconic assembly lines fell silent, marking the demise of Australia's once-proud car manufacturing industry. Electric cars are in the mix for the revival, along with other manufacturing predicted to create an estimated 5000 jobs in the next five years.
- Advanced manufacturing for the circular economy: one of the world's most advanced paper recycling technologies will be applied in the state district of Broadmeadows. Co-funding from the Australian and Victorian governments and Visy Industries means its recycling plant in Coolaroo will feature Australian-first technology designed to take an estimated 4000 truckloads of paper out of landfill, recycle it and create green-collar jobs.
- Hydrogen hub: Sims Resource Renewal has committed about $100 million to a new hydrogen hub in Campbellfield.
- Transport links: more freight on trains in Melbourne's north. The Australian and Victorian governments are making rail freight cheaper for businesses and taking trucks off suburban roads through a $16.2 million investment in direct rail freight between the port of Melbourne and Somerton.
- Transport links: new bus connection. The budget also invests $74.3 million to improve Victoria's bus services, including realigning the Somerset Estate 538 bus service onto Camp Road.
- The field of dreams project: the strategy of building unity tickets has blossomed into a $17 million project connecting sport, community and education. The Victorian government has invested an extra $1.5 million for a new community centre at the planned Rugby League centre of excellence at Seabrook Reserve under the Growing Suburbs Fund. This development combines sport and education, linking international opportunities through Melbourne Storm. It aims to inspire children to learn skills for life by connecting sport to lifelong learning.

Constituency questions

Following questions incorporated in accordance with resolution of house of 7 October:

CAULFIELD ELECTORATE

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (6057)

My constituency question is to the Minister for Health.

In 2019 the state government committed funding for a feasibility study for the future use of the Alfred Health Caulfield Hospital as part of the $180 million building works program.

I ask the minister if he could provide an update on the progress of the Caulfield Hospital feasibility study that was committed to by the state government over 18 months ago.

FRANKSTON ELECTORATE

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (6058)

My constituency question is to the honourable minister for roads, and I ask: what works are planned to address the intersection of Cranbourne Road and Beach Street in my electorate of Frankston?

With neighbouring primary and secondary schools, bus stops on both carriageways and medical consulting rooms along Cranbourne Road, the area draws a constant flow of foot traffic.

The busy intersection comprises of six lanes divided by a large median strip, thick in vegetation, with lights and a pedestrian crossing across the three lanes of the eastbound carriageway of Cranbourne Road. The three lanes of the westbound carriageway, however, have no safe means for pedestrians to navigate the fast-moving traffic as they exit from a blind corner.

Pedestrians of all ages are left to dart across the three remaining lanes and hope for the best. Well, we can do better. Frankston deserves better. And I invite the honourable minister for roads to visit the Cranbourne Road and Beach Street intersection in Frankston to understand our need for additional pedestrian crossing measures to ensure safe access across our community.

MURRAY PLAINS ELECTORATE

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (6059)

My constituency question is for the housing minister and is on behalf of the many, the too many, women, mothers, in my electorate of Murray Plains who are fleeing domestic violence—only to discover they have nowhere to run or safely hide in this region.

Could the minister explain to these women why, after Victoria's ongoing lockdowns contributed to a 12.6 per cent and 7.3 per cent spike in domestic violence in two of the shires within my electorate, there is no safe social housing available for them and their escape?

In Swan Hill and Campaspe we have had 1460 incidents—that's four cases a day every day.

My office has recently dealt with one case where a woman fled with her young daughter only to find herself trapped in a world of indifference, forcing her back to the home she had just fled.

But the violence only got worse and she ran again.

She retreated to a caravan park as a temporary solution and six months later was still there, but under threat of eviction as she had overstayed her welcome. She had lost her job while trying to find somewhere safe for the two of them, because she valued their security above employment. How, in our society, can this be seen as anything other than disgraceful and devastating?

No property managers wanted to touch an unemployed woman on the run, without a job and now, as a result, without any self-confidence or any prospects—first abused by her partner and then abandoned by bureaucracy.

Minister, when brought to my attention after not getting any help from your government, it fell to my office to make calls to the caring owners of a local real estate business to finally get her a property in a regional market where it is increasingly cheaper to buy than rent.

Unfortunately we can't pull that off on our own for every sad case that has become a local statistic, but surely, Minister, you can. Because that's your job. That's the role of a government and the relevant department.

These women, and their children, are now at their most vulnerable. All the research, all the statistics, will tell you when they finally get the courage to go that is the time the violence will reach a new peak.

Every week at least one of them will die at the hands of a partner, or ex-partner.

Despite being given 'priority' by the housing department, six months later she was still trapped in this nether world and becoming increasingly despairing.

That my office was able to finally get her a home, but only through the private sector with the support of a local real estate agent with more concern than this government, shows how easily this problem could have been solved. So, Minister, I cannot help but wonder if this government doesn't care at all—or are you hoping someone else will solve the problems for you?

MORNINGTON ELECTORATE

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (6060)

My question is for the Minister for Emergency Services.

Minister, the UFU is currently engaged in a campaign apparently intended to drive CFA volunteers out of Victoria's fire services. It is patently and dishonestly intended to convince the community that they are not safe unless they are located within a Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) coverage area.

On-the-ground tactics include bypassing CFA stations for incidents, including some in their own area, and not recognising CFA trucks as a primary vehicle. I understand that if FRV is committed for more than 30 minutes a truck will be moved to Mornington Peninsula locations from as far away as Patterson River or Dandenong, despite CFA trucks being immediately available.

Minister, why are FRV vehicles travelling long distances while CFA vehicles which are almost immediately available are being overlooked?

PASCOE VALE ELECTORATE

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (6061)

My question is for the Minister for Health, and the question I ask is: how many COVID-19 vaccinations have been administered through the Glenroy College, Oak Park Stadium, and Hadfield Community Hall pop-up sites?

Vaccination protects us, our families and our friends. Widespread vaccination will protect our community and our health system.

Vaccination is what will enable greater community activity, allowing us all to get back to doing the things we are missing the most.

As eligibility has expanded, it has been great to see so many Victorians come out to access the safe and effective vaccines available in Australia—protecting themselves, their families, and public health.

Whether it has been at our state vaccination clinics, at GPs or more recently at pharmacies, Victorians have booked in, walked up, rolled up their sleeves, and got the jab.

Locally, I have seen this firsthand with several accessible pop-up clinics being held recently. I have received a lot of positive feedback from the community regarding these sites and I am interested to find out the number of vaccinations that were administered across the locations.

PRAHRAN ELECTORATE

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) (6062)

My constituency question is to the Minister for Mental Health.

And I ask: what is the government doing to address the severe understaffing at mental health wards at Alfred Health?

As HACSU recently stated, understaffing has resulted in unsafe working conditions, poor outcomes for consumers, workers, and the community, and in breach of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Mental health workers have already stepped up during the pandemic to support Victorians, whilst already helping Victorians with some of the challenging and complex needs in the state.

The Victorian government needs to demonstrate its thanks to our mental health workers by settling the public mental health EBA and investing in mental health to address staff shortages.

HAWTHORN ELECTORATE

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (6063)

My question is for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence.

A key recommendation of Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Orange Door network is a $448 million Australia-first initiative for adults, children and young people who are experiencing or using family violence, and families needing extra support with the wellbeing and development of children.

Crucially, those who are experiencing family violence can leave their home throughout lockdown. I am pleased that this wonderful initiative is now available in my electorate of Hawthorn and for those in the broader Boroondara area, with the inner-east Orange Door network now open. My question is: how will the inner-east Orange Door network help people in Hawthorn escape family violence? I look forward to the minister's response.

ROWVILLE ELECTORATE

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (6064)

My question is to the Minister for Employment and Minister for Small Business. Minister, why has your department failed to pay the COVID-19 business support grants to so many small businesses?

Rowville businesses must be the tip of the iceberg when it comes to unpaid grants owed across Victoria. In August I raised the matter of a small business grant from the Licensed Hospitality Venue Fund owing to a craft brewing company which the department delayed for 12 weeks. Whether due to sheer incompetence or petty political bias, the department have also delayed the next grant for this business to survive through Melbourne's latest and longest lockdown.

Another resident, who has struggled with the ongoing bills and rent without the income to pay them, has also been delayed. This has impacted his mental health, and the further delays of government support are only adding more stress.

My office was contacted by a driving instructor, forced out of earning his own living through COVID lockdowns, who has been without payment since July.

These unfair delays are leaving hardworking Victorians stranded and desperate for help.

WENDOUREE ELECTORATE

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (6065)

I welcomed the recent news that up to 10 000 racing fans will be at Flemington for the 2021 Melbourne Cup on the first Tuesday in November.

My question is for the Minister for Racing about crowd numbers for the 2021 Ballarat Cup to be held on Saturday, 20 November, at Dowling Forest Racecourse, one of Victoria's premier racing and training venues.

Subject to Victoria progressing through the road map as anticipated and the relevant event approvals framework being in place at the time, would the minister please advise how many racing fans can expect to attend the Ballarat Cup this year?

I wish to congratulate Ballarat Turf Club CEO Belinda Glass and the Ballarat Turf Club for the great work they are doing to build the club and the reputation of Dowling Forest as an excellent place to train and race thoroughbreds, with the development of stables and training facilities.

I also would like to extend an invitation to the Minister for Racing and to all members of this place to come to the 2021 Ballarat Cup for a fantastic day of spring racing in regional Victoria.

Adjournment

Following matters incorporated in accordance with resolution of house of 7 October:

COVID-19

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (6067)

My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide a guarantee to Victorians that the government's investment of $100 million for air purification devices for government school classrooms is fit for purpose and they will do the job they're meant to do—neutralise COVID-19 bacteria and virus.

My office has been contacted by several people who work with COVID-19 infection control solutions and have raised concerns that the 51 000 Samsung AX7500K air purifiers purchased are only for air purification. Samsung's website states that a multilayered filter (prefilter plus carbon filter plus HEPA filter) is the key technology used. I am told, generally speaking, this is a technology that only captures airborne particles and reduces odours, not neutralises COVID-19.

We are fully in support of getting students back into school classrooms quickly and safely; however, we seek the minister's assurance that the air purifiers the government have procured will not make returning to the classroom unsafe for Victorian school children, teachers and staff.

Industry experts have raised with me genuine concerns that the specific units purchased are generally made for home use, where there are a small quantity of people sitting in their lounge room and pathogens travel smaller distances to the unit in the corner of the room.

Using these units in schools means that they will be put into classrooms with 20 to 30 students in them, bringing into question whether there has been sufficient time spent researching what the best air purifiers are for use in schools, to ensure the correct solution has been found, which will disinfect the air and keep viruses such as SARS-CoV-2 and the seasonal flu out of classrooms.

I am also informed that there is currently zero documented proof in existence that shows virus particles are efficiently captured by the filters, as they are too small and evade capture. There is a very real possibility that viruses will end up recirculating around the room, potentially infecting everyone in it. The worry is these filter units will likely end up becoming germ boxes within a few weeks, then pushed to the corner because they are obtrusive, noisy and a trip hazard in busy, populated classrooms.

Our students need to be back at school after missing out on long periods of face-to-face learning in the classrooms at schools, and we encourage this to be done as soon as possible and safely. Therefore I ask that the minister make inquiries into these matters, reassure himself these units are fit for purpose and provide a guarantee that these Samsung air purifiers will provide that level of safety.

COVID-19

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (6068)

My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

The action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the support provided to multicultural and multifaith communities in my electorate throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last week I was delighted to represent the minister at the South East Community Links COVID-19 vaccination information session for the Tamil community.

It was a fantastic event and very informative.

Thank you to the staff and volunteers from SECL for your commitment in coordinating the COVID-19 vaccination workshops and in supporting the community throughout the pandemic.

It is a great testament to the work of SECL that the virtual information sessions have already reached over 1000 people in a single month.

Even more impressive is that these sessions have encouraged more than 300 people to get vaccinated.

Thank you to Dr Larissa Daddo, Peter McNamara, Junior Melo, Mary Iruthaya and all community members that attended.

Also thank you to the minister, and I look forward to hearing more about the how the Andrews Labor government is supporting Victoria's multicultural communities to face the challenges posed by the pandemic.

HIGH PRODUCTIVITY FREIGHT VEHICLE NETWORK

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (6069)

My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask him to provide the Parliament with a full report on the current state of the high productivity freight vehicle network.

Last week the department provided information to the industry about reducing red tape and making it easier for HPFVs to move around regional Victoria.

It said that 700 kilometres of routes has been preapproved, which is streamlining the permit process for certain combinations in northern, central and eastern Victoria.

While this reduction of red tape is welcome, if not long overdue, upon follow-up with industry stakeholders, the announcement doesn't look to fix the major problems with the network and is hampering planning for freight carriers across the state.

The network is still full of choke points—which means many routes aren't suitable for the heaviest and most efficient freight vehicle combinations. For example, a 36-metre A-double milk tanker carrying product from Portland through to Melbourne can't make the full trip because of a restricted bridge along the route.

It's the same for an A-double travelling from Shepparton to Melbourne—with a number of restricted bridges along the way.

This means that the most efficient vehicle can't be used and means more trucks on roads which are already buckling and breaking under the pressure of an increased freight task.

I ask the minister to provide to the Parliament a list of choke points along the network, the estimated cost of bringing these up to a standard to allow the highest level of HPFVs and what the expected time frame of the work would be.

By providing this information the minister will also be allowing the industry to plan—a carrier isn't going to go out and buy a fleet of A-doubles if the routes they need to operate on can't handle them because of a couple of bridges or culverts that need upgrading.

Letting the industry know which areas are going to be repaired to be bought up to standard will allow them to look at their needs and plan accordingly.

Getting this network up to scratch to allow for the highest level of these HPFVs will in turn reduce the amount of trucks on our roads—because one trip will be able to carry much more product to where it needs to be, which of course means less trips.

These HPFVs are better for long-term road conditions because the weight is more evenly distributed across the vehicle, meaning the impact on the road surface is more evenly spread and of course leading to less movements.

Minister, for the benefit of our freight industry and the condition of roads I urge you to get these bridges and culverts upgraded and provide the industry with a time line of works so they can plan their future fleet needs.

BAYSWATER ELECTORATE LEVEL CROSSING REMOVALS

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (6070)

I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. The action I seek is that the minister provide my community with an update on the latest on the massive news that we'll be removing 10 more level crossings across the network, including three dangerous and congested locals.

Soon, there won't be a level crossing between Ferntree Gully and the city as we remove the Bedford Road level crossing.

And there won't be a single level crossing on the entire Lilydale line.

In 2016 we got rid of two on Scoresby Road and Mountain Highway and rebuilt Bayswater station.

But that wasn't enough.

So now we're removing the level crossings at:

- Dublin Road level crossing in Ringwood East, and a new station via a new rail trench under road;
- Coolstore Road level crossing in Croydon is now going, with a new Croydon station via a rail bridge;
- Bedford Road level crossing on the Belgrave line is going, with a new rail trench built underneath Bedford Road in Ringwood.

It'll unclog our roads, meaning we can run more trains more often and get you home safer and sooner.

Removing these and the others as part of the 10 extra will mean that's now 85 by 2025.

And it'll create:

- 4000 new jobs;
- a $2.5 billion economic boost to the economy.

This is exciting work, and I can't wait to see it get underway.

I thank the minister for her consideration of my request.

COVID-19

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (6071)

My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and the action that I seek is for the minister to permit rapid testing for workers who are not vaccinated by the mandated deadline in my electorate. This is particularly relevant where services to the community like child care and education or businesses would otherwise have to close or significantly reduce operating hours or access to essential services to the community simply because a replacement workforce is not readily available to backfill unvaccinated workers who will not be able attend their workplace.

As highlighted by the AHPPC, mandatory vaccination can have 'unintended consequences', particularly in reference to workers who will not be vaccinated by the government-imposed deadline, who will have to be furloughed.

In these businesses and community services, because there isn't an abundance of workers available, we simply can't backfill those roles in the short term. In fact, there is already a critical shortage of childcare workers, teachers and trained workers in key roles right across Lowan—our employment issue isn't a matter of unemployment but around filling vacant jobs.

In my electorate I have been contacted by parents in Horsham and Hamilton who have been told that childcare will not be available from the mandated vaccinated date simply because some workers will not be vaccinated by the mandated deadline and these roles cannot be filled. As is well known, it is women who are most impacted by a lack of access to child care, which is one of the many reasons all alternatives to minimise the transmission of COVID must be investigated and supported by the government of the day.

A small school in my electorate will lose half their full-time teachers due to the mandatory vaccination deadline, and it is the young students—who will finally be back in the classroom after months away from the classroom and their mates—who will pay the price and won't have any teacher available in the classroom to support their education.

Business owners have also contacted me around the difficulty in finding staff to fill key roles in their business to ensure they can keep their doors open. On recently speaking to the owner of a local hospitality business, they will lose four of their seven workers when the mandatory vaccination date is imposed. They won't be able to open their doors, simply because they can't replace the staff who won't be vaccinated by the government mandated date in a region which hasn't had a local case of COVID for over a year.

We're weeks away from harvest, yet unvaccinated workers will not be able to perform essential support to aid harvest. Given the great majority of this work involves no contact at all with other humans but is instead sitting in a truck or header by yourself, and due to the chronic lack of farmhands and harvest workers, this could be devastating for our agricultural sector, who need harvest to proceed on time to get food on our tables.

I encourage everyone to get vaccinated or at least make an appointment to speak to their own health professional to discuss vaccination and their own situation. While I can see that mandating vaccination will push up lagging vaccination rates in areas of Melbourne, our region has done an exceptional job of getting vaccinated.

With that in mind, it is clear that mandating vaccination is having unintended consequences for our local services and businesses by reducing the available workforce, and an inability to fill these vacancies in the immediate future will result in a significant impact on the wider community, emphasised in sparsely populated rural and regional Victoria where there simply isn't a fully trained workforce waiting in the wings for a job.

There is an alternative. Rapid testing could be used in those areas where jobs are not able to be filled with a vaccinated workforce.

In industries where there are no alternative workers available, and particularly in regions in Lowan where there are no localised cases of COVID and very high rates of vaccination, alternatives to mandatory vaccination must be considered.

I therefore ask the minister to permit rapid testing for workers who are not vaccinated by the mandated deadline to ensure the 'unintended consequences' of a reduced workforce does not inadvertently yet significantly cut access to essential services and businesses in our wider community.

MORDIALLOC FREEWAY

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (6072)

My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action I seek is for the minister to update my community on the expected opening of the Mordialloc Freeway later this year.

The Mordialloc Freeway is a critical project for residents within the Mordialloc electorate. The 9-kilometre freeway project is over 90 per cent completed, and the Kingston and Greater Dandenong communities are eagerly waiting for its opening and the benefits that come from this important project.

It is expected that the Mordialloc Freeway will take significant pressure off local roads, including Wells Road, Springvale Road, Governor Road, White Street, Lower Dandenong Road and the Nepean Highway, which will give local roads back to local residents. It is strongly complemented with the infrastructure upgrades, including the level crossing removals in Cheltenham, Mentone, Edithvale, Chelsea and Bonbeach, which will ease traffic congestion and allow for more trains to operate on the Frankston train line.

Talked about for decades, the Mordialloc Freeway is expected to be completed in the later part of 2021, and I ask on behalf of my local community when this vital infrastructure project is expected to be completed.

OUYEN PRIMARY SCHOOL SITE

Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (6073)

My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education.

The action I seek is for the minister to provide an update regarding plans to rezone and sell off the former Ouyen Primary School site.

The site, located in Hunt Street, Ouyen, was one of three schools in north-west Victoria which were slated for demolition in 2015 to be either repurposed or sold.

There is a high community interest in the future of the site, particularly as it provides an opportunity to address the growing housing shortage in the town.

Only a few weeks ago the first sod was turned for a very similar project in the Mallee town of Sea Lake, where up to eight houses will be built at a former elementary school site off the back of a $300 000 state government investment.

This project will make a significant impact on housing availability in Sea Lake and will help to attract more workers and families to the region.

We need a similar project in Ouyen.

Places like Ouyen have both jobs and a great lifestyle to offer, but at present the housing isn't there to meet that demand.

In a similar manner to what's being achieved in Sea Lake, the state government has an opportunity to step in and tackle housing supply shortages directly through the sale of vacant school assets.

What is promising is that Mildura Rural City Council has previously expressed interest in potentially securing part of the former Ouyen Primary School site.

The local community has also been pushing hard for the land to be divided up for housing.

I am aware that a cultural heritage study has been requested, as the site is positioned on Crown land.

I'm very keen to hear a status report on where we are up to, as this site does have great potential to bring some exciting developments to Ouyen, potentially in the immediate future.

URBAN VEGETATION

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (6074)

- My adjournment is for the Minister for Environment, Energy and Climate Change.
- The action I seek is that the minister update me on the rollout of our government's More Trees for a Greener and Cooler West initiative, which aims to see 500 000 trees planted across Melbourne's western suburbs.

- This is a fantastic initiative that will see our parks and waterways, our streets and our schools reinvigorated with trees and green spaces.
- As the minister knows, Melbourne's west is on average 3 degrees warmer than greener and leafier suburbs in the north and east, a result of the urban heat island effect.
- And that's why planting these trees is so important for our community in the west.
- Now, as I understand it, the first stage of our rollout for these trees has been announced, which includes 10 schools in Wyndham.
- We have a number of eager volunteer and Landcare groups eager to help take part in this program.
- That's why I welcome an update from the minister on how this program will be delivered and how our volunteers can do their bit.

SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (6075)

My adjournment matter is for the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, and the action that I seek is:

- a commitment from the minister for timely and thorough consultation with communities, including local councils, regarding the development of the Suburban Rail Loop, specifically in relation to that part of the loop affecting the Sir William Fry Reserve and surrounding areas.

Over the past eight weeks I have been contacted by many local residents who are profoundly disappointed with the lack of consultation regarding the proposed Suburban Rail Loop station and associated infrastructure in Cheltenham, commencing at the Sir William Fry Reserve and stretching north in the direction of Clayton.

Members of my community have said to me that they have not had their voices heard by the Andrews Labor government, the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop or the Suburban Rail Loop Authority and have not been properly consulted on proposals or planning decisions that will likely dramatically affect their community, lives and livelihoods.

As our community recovers from the impact of COVID-19, our governments should seek to better unite us and not divide us. They should be focused on strengthening our local neighbourhoods and economies, not instilling uncertainty. That's why there must be transparent decision-making with regard to the Suburban Rail Loop—to ensure that all decisions related to this project are made with our local community seen as an important collaborator in this major project rather than a thorn in the side to decisions that have been made far removed from the reality of my local community.

It is, after all, my local community that will be left with the legacy of this project for many decades to come. It is for this reason that the government and its agencies need to listen and engage in a transparent and meaningful way with our community, specifically residents and businesses in the communities of Cheltenham, Highett and Pennydale.

Local voices provide much-needed understanding about the localities—an understanding that is not always fully appreciated or considered by government making decisions from afar.

This suburban voice is central to the aptly named 'Suburban Rail Loop'.

I would like to reinforce that community voices have a right to be heard, a right to object and a right to express their concerns.

This government has already denied elected representatives the opportunity for proper consultation to be had with all stakeholders—including local council and communities—who are impacted by this development.

I urge that this does not happen again.

This project will take more than 25 years to construct and cost over 50 billion taxpayer dollars. If this project is really a 'once-in-a-generation opportunity' rather than a gamble, then the Andrews Labor government ought to do the job right from the very beginning, starting now.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (6076)

My adjournment is to the Minister for Health, and the action that I seek is that the minister provide me with an update on the work the Andrews Labor government is doing to increase the rate of COVID-19 vaccinations in the Northcote electorate.

The pandemic has had an immense impact on the inner north. The emotional, financial and social impacts on our community are very real. And while we have all pulled together with grace and courage and resilience, we know there is a way to go yet and we know that the only safe pathway out of this pandemic is vaccination.

As it stands, the Northcote electorate and, more broadly, the municipalities of Darebin and Yarra have vaccination rates that fall well below the state.

Every week I share an update with my community on the rates of vaccination in Darebin, Yarra and surrounding local government areas. The latest data shows Darebin at 76.5 per cent first doses and 52.5 per cent second, while Yarra sits at 74 per cent first doses and 57.1 per cent second.

In Victoria as a whole right now, we are sitting at 86 per cent first dose and 60 per cent second.

In real terms, this difference means that as we reach our next threshold and as we begin to ease restrictions and open up there will be more of my constituents who will be vulnerable to the serious impacts of this virus.

My community is well aware of the seriousness of COVID-19. And we know there are cases already in our community. Outbreaks have been recorded at local schools and businesses, supermarkets and care facilities. We have had deaths.

We need to improve our rates of vaccination across the entire state to achieve effective herd immunity. That means concerted efforts to increase uptake in hard-to-reach communities and those which have had a slow start due to vaccine supply issues from the commonwealth.

It's been my great pleasure over recent months to support our local multicultural communities to take the initiative in running their own pop-up vaccination hubs.

In Thornbury, the Islamic Museum of Australia and the St George Greek Orthodox Church have both shown commendable leadership in driving this work. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them and our local health partner Your Community Health for their dedication to helping to protect our community.

Every day our vaccination numbers are increasing. But we need to accelerate them.

There are so many things my community are looking forward to when restrictions ease. We are a social bunch here in Northcote. Family oriented and deeply diverse, our suburbs shine bright with community spirit and vibrant creativity.

Getting vaccinated means we will be able to do the things we've all missed so much and most of all reconnect with each other and our community. It means that we will be safe.

I welcome the minister's update on what our government is doing to help boost the vaccination rates in the inner north and protect my community.