Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 30 July 2026

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Ben Carroll (from 28 July 2026)

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

Daniel Andrews (to 27 September 2023)

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Gabrielle Williams (from 28 July 2026)

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

Jacinta Allan (to 27 September 2023)

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

Jess Wilson (from 18 November 2025)

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

John Pesutto (to 27 December 2024)

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

David Southwick (from 28 January 2026)

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

David Southwick (to 27 December 2024)

Leader of the Nationals

Danny O'Brien (from 26 November 2024)

Peter Walsh (to 26 November 2024)

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Anthony Carbines (from 15 April 2026)

Mary-Anne Thomas (to 15 April 2026)

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury (from 13 October 2025)

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

James Newbury (to 7 January 2025)

Members of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

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

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

Party abbreviations

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

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Thursday 30 July 2026

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

Business of the house

Notices of motion and orders of the day

The SPEAKER (09:34): General business, notices of motion 74 and 75 and orders of the day 6 to 9, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

Petitions

Murray Valley Highway–Frank Drive, Yarrawonga

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) presented a petition bearing 135 signatures:

> This petition of the residents of Yarrawonga, Mulwala and Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the serious and increasing safety concerns at the intersection of the Murray Valley Highway and Frank Drive, Yarrawonga, which has experienced significant traffic growth following the establishment of Bunnings, Aldi and the recent opening of Coles. Residents have reported frequent near misses, regular traffic accidents and increasing congestion at the intersection, creating an unacceptable risk to motorists, pedestrians and local families.
>
> The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly call on the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to urgently assess the intersection of the Murray Valley Highway and Frank Drive, Yarrawonga, and fund and implement appropriate safety upgrades, including traffic controls and other infrastructure improvements necessary to ensure the safety of all road users.

Ordered that petition be considered on next day of meeting.

Ordered that petition (Football Victoria) presented by Anthony Cianflone (Pascoe Vale) on 28 July be considered on next day of meeting.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Commission for Children and Young People – With us, not against us: A systemic inquiry to learn from the experiences of children who entered the criminal justice system before 14 – Ordered to be published

Professional Engineers Registration Act 2019 – Review of the operation of the Act under s 102

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Heavy Vehicle National Law Application Act 2013 – SR 109

Road Safety Act 1986 – SR 110

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 74, 103, 104.

Business of the house

Standing and sessional orders

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (09:36): I move, by leave:

> That the resolution of the house on 18 June 2026 to suspend standing and sessional orders to consider a motion for a parliamentary apology to victims of historical child sexual abuse in Victorian government schools be amended as follows:
>
> (1) in paragraph (5), omit 'Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Minister for Education' and insert 'Premier and the Leader of the Opposition to speak on the motion for a maximum of 15 minutes each';
>
> (2) at the end of paragraph (5), omit 'each'.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

Motions by leave

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (09:37): I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the Premier and his government for failing to listen to Victorians, as discovered in the 88 seats I visited as part of my Fresh Start tour.

Leave refused.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (09:37): I move, by leave:

> That this house: notes that the US military is planning a permanent weapons stockpile in south-eastern Victoria while US-backed Israeli forces continue to kill Palestinians in Gaza; and refuses to fuel the US–Israeli war crimes.

Leave refused.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:38): I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the member for Bendigo East for consistently failing to provide adequate CFA resourcing, including at stations such as Axe Creek, a shortfall exposed during our Fresh Start tour.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:38): I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the member for Oakleigh for consistently failing young parents in their electorate struggling with cost-of-living pressures –

Leave refused.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:38): I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the member for Ripon for consistently failing to advocate for farmers.

Leave refused.

Members statements

North East Link

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (09:39): Residents of Bulleen are facing the construction of a smokestack for the North East Link that will be 53 metres high, that will have no air filtration and that is going to pour thousands of cubic grams of exhaust onto the Veneto Club, onto Belle Vue Primary and onto the Trinity sports fields and other local schools, not to mention the hundreds of homes that surround it. This facility is under construction now. There is no concept from the state government that they will put a filter in this facility, and residents are furious. They are angry. They have been deceived by a government that said they would look after their health and look after their wellbeing, and none of that

is the case. If the flip-flop Premier decides that he can change his views on union corruption, change his views on the Suburban Rail Loop and literally change his views on everything he has said for the last decade, why won't he stand up for the people in the wake of the North East Link who are facing a smokestack over their homes? This Premier is underwhelming, insincere and believes in nothing. He does not even believe that union corruption exists, yet he was the transport minister when it was occurring. He was either stupid, ignorant or part of the corruption. Time will expose this man as the fraud that he is. The election will expose him as a fraudulent Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members about imputations.

Dandenong Tech School

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport, Minister for Women and Girls) (09:41): After years of planning, partnership and hard work we officially opened the Dandenong Tech School last Friday, a remarkable new facility which brings future technology to Dandenong and even more opportunities for young people to pursue ambitious futures closer to home. Dandenong Tech School will support more than 13,500 students from 23 local schools to access free hands-on STEM learning. This is a place carefully designed to inspire young people and to build their practical skills. They now have the opportunities to explore emerging technologies and challenge themselves to think differently about the future while building their own skills and confidence. Importantly, this investment will also benefit local industry by giving students exposure to advanced manufacturing, engineering, digital technologies and other growth sectors. The tech school will help build a skilled workforce pipeline for local employers for many years to come. It will strengthen connections between education and industry, helping businesses access the talent that they need while creating new pathways for young people in our community. Dandenong Tech School is a place where students will discover new possibilities. Together with upgrades to Dandenong High School, Lyndale high school and many other local schools in my electorate, we are strengthening the foundations for future generations and reinforcing Dandenong's reputation as a place of opportunity and aspiration. A big thankyou to Chisholm TAFE and our local schools, industry partners and the broader community for their collaboration in bringing this project to life.

U3A Myrtleford

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (09:43): It was an absolute delight to speak with the Myrtleford U3A during the winter recess. There are many very, very active minds out there wanting to know more about the role of the local MP and understand how Parliament ticks. Philip Shirrefs organised the event, which was well attended in the beautiful Myrtleford Library.

North East Support and Action for Youth

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (09:43): Selling sausages at Bunnings last weekend with NESAY in Wangaratta was a terrific morning. Raising funds for North East Support and Action for Youth helps young people and their families across north-east Victoria, which helps to build independent living skills and to stay engaged in education and training. I will continue to work with NESAY to make the next steps towards supporting these young families.

Mini Woolies, Wangaratta

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (09:43): I joined the Rural City of Wangaratta mayor Irene Grant recently for the launch of the second mini Woolies supermarket in Wangaratta. The mini Woolies program is a training facility located within the Villa Maria Catholic Homes on Rowan Street, and it helps young people with disabilities to be trained for future roles in our communities. The skill sets learned at mini Woolies prepare these young people for the workforce, perhaps in Woolworths itself or other vocations. I want to commend Woolworths for the significant program, one that has outstanding outcomes and makes a real difference for young people who may struggle for employment opportunities.

Firearms regulation

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (09:44): I am looking forward next week to having Senator Bridget McKenzie in Wangaratta to discuss law-abiding firearm owners' rights. Too often after horrific events like the Bondi Beach shootings, lawful gun owners come under pressure and scrutiny. Senator McKenzie and I fully support legitimate firearms owners, and I look forward to the forum at Wangaratta Turf Club.

BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:44): I was delighted this week to attend and help make the inaugural BAPS women's leadership conference in Parliament a reality. The BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha is a spiritual, volunteer-driven fellowship dedicated to improving society through individual growth, and I am proud to have its temple located in my electorate of Mill Park. The Carroll Labor government is proud of the rich, multicultural and multifaith diversity we enjoy in Victoria, a diversity enshrined in our legislation and celebrated across our communities. I have been fortunate to build a strong and collaborative relationship with BAPS and with many of our diverse community groups.

Our government also values gender equality and the advancement of women and girls, leading important health and economic reform through the office for women. On Tuesday some 90 BAPS women and girls joined my parliamentary colleagues and me for a genuine and meaningful exchange about civic participation and women in leadership and about our Parliament. We also discussed the multicultural funding that supports community groups and how we can strengthen multiculturalism across our state. It was a proud reminder of how strongly this side of the house is represented by women, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with participants inspired to engage further in Victorian community life and leadership.

I would like to especially mention Shital Patel and Helly Nagar from the BAPS for their role in making Tuesday's event a great success.

Government performance

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:46): Victoria has a new Premier this week, a Premier that is backflipping on every policy. The Premier has come out and said that he will have a royal commission into the corruption payments that have occurred in this state, but I just wonder how far this new Premier will go. He has already talked about integrity, which he lacks. You do not look someone in the eye and say you have my support and then stab them in the back. So his integrity is in doubt to start with. But how far will this royal commission go? Will he call the former premiers before this royal commission and, if those former premiers are found to be implicated in the corruption in this state, will he go further and cancel their defined benefits? Goodness knows, this state has lost $15 billion in corruption payments, and now we are paying two former premiers $300,000 a year for life. Victorians have paid enough. This royal commission needs to happen, and it needs to happen quickly.

Kokoda Track

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:47): I would also like to congratulate my Kokoda award recipients this year who trekked Kokoda with me. Cohen Cogo, Sam Richards and Ella Clarke from my community completed Kokoda alongside me. And, yes, I did complete it this year, though a helicopter did fly overhead and someone mentioned my Uber was here. The kids did a great job in representing our community, and I am very, very proud of their achievement.

Carrum electorate student leaders

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (09:47): I am delighted to congratulate some outstanding young students in my electorate. Congratulations to the Banyan Fields Primary School 2026 school captains

Zoe Madden, Jayani Gosai and Liam Sem. Congratulations to the Lyndhurst Primary School 2026 school captains Shnaya Gupta and Aidan Head. Congratulations to the Patterson Lakes Primary School 2026 school captains Alia Sharp and Josh Quinn. Congratulations to the Rowellyn Park Primary School 2026 school captains Charlotte Harden and Phoenix Heinrich. Congratulations to the Seaford Primary School 2026 school captains Grace Greenwood, Ruby Maher, Samuel Aliez Gutierrez, Maclaren Wilson, Simone Pascouau Kotula. And congratulations to the Skye Primary School 2026 school captains Eleanor Cavey and Ruairi James. You are outstanding role models and ambassadors for your schools. I know how hard you are working to support your peers to be the absolute best they can be. All the very best for the rest of the year.

Patterson Lakes Canoe Club

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (09:48): I was delighted to join our local paddling community as four outstanding clubs came together to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Patterson Lakes Canoe Club. It was wonderful to celebrate alongside the Patterson Lakes Outrigger Club, Dragons Abreast Pink Lotus and Peninsula Dragonflys – clubs that exemplify community inclusion and absolute sporting excellence. I congratulate every member, volunteer coach, committee member and supporter, past and present.

Mornington electorate bus services

Chris CREWTHER (Mornington) (09:49): On 5 July bus route 886 commenced between Mornington and Hastings, plus changes to route 784 to service around 2000 residents who had had no bus services. This followed years of determined advocacy by local residents, retirement village committees, other members of Parliament in this place and me. Before the 2022 election the Liberals committed to a Monington to Hastings service and changes to local routes so buses would finally reach retirement villages and residents around Bungower and Racecourse roads. Labor at the time did not match these commitments. I continued pursuing them in Parliament, repeated representations to successive ministers and continued public advocacy until this government finally matched our commitments and committed to delivering these services. The result is about 2000 people now have services to and from Beleura Village, Peninsula Grange, Racecourse Grange, Mornington Gardens Holiday Village and St Macartan's Parish Primary School for the first time. Route 886 between Mornington and Hastings is also providing 233 trips each week. I thank the residents who fought alongside me and others, particularly those at Peninsula Grange and Beleura Village. It was great to celebrate with them by taking a trip together on the service and getting a coffee at Mercetta. This is what strong local representation can achieve.

Williamstown Swimming and Life Saving Club

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (09:50): We have hit an incredible milestone on this long but worthy Williamstown Swimming and Life Saving Club journey. Back in 2021 I secured funding for the life saving club's clubhouse redevelopment. It was part of a $28 million program which went towards upgrading local facilities. But finally, after this long journey, I would like to thank the Minister for Planning for approving this project to proceed.

Williamstown Seagulls FIDA Football Club

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (09:51): The Williamstown Seagulls FIDA Football Club hosted another successful Dan Oakley memorial round. Daniel was a much-loved member of the football community, and it is always wonderful to see the community come together to honour his memory and the values he embodied. I am always pleased to support this important event.

Williamstown Historical Society

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (09:51): For seven decades the Williamstown Historical Society has played an invaluable role in preserving and sharing the rich history of Williamstown. I was delighted to join members for the afternoon tea that celebrated the society's 70th anniversary. Thanks for all the hard work of the committee members and volunteers.

Williamstown electorate office work experience students

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (09:51): If you look up into the gallery, you will see five awesome young people from Williamstown who have been doing work experience in my office. A special shout-out to Neel Sunkari, Evie Curtin, Chloe Wright, Brynn Hartigan and Ann Dang for coming into the chamber today.

Morwell electorate

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (09:52): My colleague and friend Jess Wilson received a rock star welcome in the Latrobe Valley last week in what was her 80th stop in the Fresh Start tour. We caught up with Dan Brewer, journalist at TRFM, and Gabi and Dan, whose popular breakfast show is broadcast out of Traralgon right across regional Victoria. We had a coffee with a group of regulars at Red Annex – thanks very much to Kate and Mitch for hosting us in Traralgon – and spoke about everything from land tax to payroll tax to how to have your scones. I took Jess to see firsthand the ever-present danger that is the Bank Street intersection in Traralgon, and she could not believe her eyes – or her ears, for that matter – when I took her through the sequence of excuses offered up by Labor over the past four years for why we still have not got traffic lights. We met Katie and Rob, owners of Farnham Court Hotel, to hear about the disastrous impacts of Labor's Commonwealth Games cancellation. Katie and Rob had just entered a $300,000 contract with teams Wales, England and Scotland to host their athletes, and the very next morning the event was scrapped. Jess and I walked Commercial Road in Morwell to see the sad state of affairs in the CBD. Every second shopfront is empty, and businesses are leaving at a rapid rate of knots because of the out-of-control antisocial crime. We met with Alfi and Graeme from Advance Morwell to talk about these issues and also Sandra from Viva Shoes, Donna from Dear Delilah and Morwell newsagent Ray Burgess to follow up with what is going on on the streets. We also heard from Michael, a local community member who has researched the impact of rooming houses in Morwell.

Michael Bourchier

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Defence Industry, Minister for Skills and TAFE) (09:53): I rise today to honour the life of Michael Bourchier, a visionary manufacturer and passionate advocate of Australian industry whose recent passing is a profound loss to Victoria's manufacturing community. A fitter and turner by trade, Michael began his career as an apprentice at Toyota before co-founding Amiga Engineering with his brother Dale in 1988. From humble beginnings and just a handful of manual machines, he built the Tullamarine-based family business into one of Australia's leading advanced manufacturers, recognised internationally for its expertise in precision engineering, computer numerical control machining and metal additive manufacturing. Michael was fiercely proud of Australian manufacturing and never stopped championing the capability of local industry. His leadership drove innovation, helping Amiga become one of only a handful of companies in the world capable of metal 3D printing in tungsten and the only company in Australia certified to print in Scalmalloy.

Those who knew Michael remember his generosity, optimism and unwavering support for others. He mentored countless people, built lifelong relationships, and treated customers, suppliers and employees alike like family. His belief in collaboration and sharing knowledge strengthened business across Victoria and inspired the next generation of manufacturers. His legacy lives on through the

people he inspired and the enduring business that he created. I extend my sincere condolences to his wife Cecily, daughters Dee and Melissa, their families and everyone at Amiga Engineering.

Vehicle registration

Tim READ (Brunswick) (09:55): Melbourne has an obesity problem, and it is killing our children. Let me explain. Supersized utes like the Dodge Ram and the Ford Raptor are increasingly clogging the arteries of our narrow suburban streets and bulging out of parking spaces. But these truckzillas are more than just an inconvenience; they are more likely to kill pedestrians, especially children. Children are eight times more likely to die when hit by these monster cars compared to a lighter car. It is no surprise that pedestrian deaths in Victoria last year reached a 17-year high. These vehicles are deadly because of the ridiculous height of their bonnets. The average bonnet height of a Ram is between 1.2 and 1.3 metres, so they are less likely to actually see small children and more likely to collide with a child's head or chest. A US study found that vertical SUV and ute bonnet heights greater than 100 centimetres are about 45 per cent more likely to cause pedestrian deaths than vehicles with lower bonnet heights. Likewise, a European study found a similar conclusion. The government must act to protect our children, pedestrians and cyclists from these lethal vehicles. We should increase, even double, the registration of these monster vehicles if they are registered to a Melbourne address, unless they have a specific farm, business or commercial purpose.

Sankat Mochan Samiti

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Sport and Major Events) (09:56): A very big congratulations on the formal opening of the Sankat Mochan Samiti Indian Cultural Centre in Oakleigh South. Real community places like this do not just come about by chance. They are made possible by extraordinary hard work and a selfless dedication to making us all feel part of something. The Victorian Labor government also contributed a significant amount to support that centre. Kindness and an overwhelming welcome to everyone has always been at the heart of that place, and it is a place where I always feel at home. Thank you so much for allowing me to join you on this journey over the last decade. I would also like to say that places of worship and community gathering always start with a seed. And that seed was planted so long ago by Arvind and Dr Sunila Shrivastava, community leaders without equal. Their work and that of those who joined them on the journey are why this is a core part of our community. We lost Arvind only recently, but the legacy he and Dr Sunila have left will not be forgotten. They will always hold a very special place in my heart.

Oakleigh Krushers

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Sport and Major Events) (09:57): I would also like to congratulate Oakleigh Krushers on the 10th anniversary of women's football at this fantastic local club. A decade ago Krushers started on a journey with women's footy that has been extraordinary. This is a family club, and the welcome to everyone is real. As good as the women's teams are, it is not just about the game. It is about real community, being a part of something local and something special. Congratulations, and may you have continued success both on and off the field.

Elite Roads

Anthony MARSH (Nepean) (09:57): Victorians deserve to know who is being paid to build their roads. They deserve to know the people behind the money before they deal with them. Elite Roads is owned and run by a criminal. Deon Coote is a criminal environmental offender prosecuted for illegally and carelessly dumping industrial waste. Despite this, Mr Coote and his dodgy company are working on Victorian road projects, including the delayed and mismanaged Peninsula Link. The *Age* has now revealed that Elite Roads made payments to the underworld crime figure Mick Gatto while receiving work on Victoria's Big Build. This is corruption and it is criminal. But that would be business as usual for Mr Coote and Elite Roads.

The Big Build has created a culture where contracts can be acquired and disputes settled with bullying, bribes and blackmail. My local colleagues and I will not be bullied, and neither should Victorian taxpayers. Victorians should not be lining the pockets of a criminal who sees Victoria as nothing more than an industrial dumping ground. Anyone considering working with Elite Roads should know who they are dealing with. They would be doing business with a company run by a criminal who has made regular payments to the underworld and delivered little. Elite Roads insists its contracts were properly secured. If anyone believes that, I have a bridge or perhaps an overpriced road to sell them.

Motor neurone disease

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Community Sport) (09:59): I would like to recognise the incredible efforts of the Coles Craigieburn Central team, who recently came together to support this year's DIY Big Freeze FightMND fundraiser. Led by store manager Voula and supported by Maria, affectionately known as Yoohoo, the Coles team organised a fantastic community event that brought together people for a cause that is close to the hearts of many Victorians. Their dedication and months of planning helped create a successful fundraiser that raised more than $5000, surpassing the team's original goal. The event featured guest speaker Krystal and saw James, Julian, Michelle, Valda, Bill, Andrew, Sebastian, Emma and Maria bravely take part in the dunk tank, helping raise funds and awareness for the fight against motor neurone disease.

Importantly, this was not just a Coles effort. A number of Craigieburn Central tenants rallied behind the fundraiser, with businesses across the centre lending their support. I also acknowledge the support of the Craigieburn Central management team, whose involvement helped make the event such a success. I particularly commend Voula and Maria for their tireless work in engaging the local community and coordinating support from fellow tenants. Their leadership demonstrated the generosity, compassion and community spirit of Craigieburn. I congratulate everyone involved and thank them for making a meaningful contribution to FightMND. Their efforts are a great example of what can be achieved when the community comes together to support an important cause.

Kalkallo electorate office work experience students

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Community Sport) (10:00): I thank my recent work experience students Ahsen Uslu, Ayor Luk, Asma Al Noman and Jacob Peck. These young people remind me every day that the future is bright.

Ringwood electorate community organisations

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (10:00): I rise today to acknowledge two organisations that reflect the very best of the Ringwood community. At this time of the year the days are short and the nights are cold, and for most of us home is a place of warmth and comfort. But for those experiencing homelessness, winter can be a frightening and lonely time. That is why Maroondah Winter Shelter is such an important part of my local community. Throughout winter, the winter shelter program provides homeless men with a warm bed, a hot shower, a nourishing meal and, above all, a safe place to sleep. I want to pay tribute to the incredible volunteers who make it all happen: the people who cook dinners and breakfasts, make beds, wash linen, drive guests and give up their evenings and even stay all night to ensure that someone else is cared for. Their generosity and compassion make a real difference.

I also recently had the pleasure of attending the Stroke a Chord concert. Stroke a Chord bring together stroke survivors and people living with aphasia through music, fostering confidence, friendship and connection. It is remarkable hearing people living with aphasia and other speech difficulties sing together with such confidence and joy.

To everyone involved with Maroondah Winter Shelter and Stroke a Chord, thank you. Thank you for your extraordinary contributions. Thank you for your kindness, your generosity and your dedication. Those things are what make Ringwood a better place.

Eltham Junior Football Club

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (10:02): Congratulations to Eltham junior footy club on their fantastic Girls in Footy gala day, recognising the growing strength of girls football in our community. It was fantastic fun, bringing together players, families and supporters for a wonderful community celebration. We had football, live music, face painting, glitter tattoos and a mini market, creating a vibrant atmosphere both on and off the field. One of the teams playing, the Diamond Valley Lightning under-18s girls team, known as the Bolts, brings together players from Eltham, Research, Monty and Diamond Creek. It is a fantastic example of clubs working together to ensure young women continue to have opportunities to play the sport they love. Congratulations to team captain Gracie Alexander, Pip Hanson, coach Lee Warne, team manager Naomi Robertson and girls operations manager Lauren Pilakis for their leadership and commitment. It was a great day. Thank you, EJFC president Matt Weisheit, for your leadership in continuing to foster an inclusive and welcoming club environment.

Eltham electorate all-abilities football

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (10:03): Inclusion matters, and I am so proud of our inclusive community, like our local Football Integration Development Association all-abilities teams. Watching a footy match between Eltham Panthers and Lower Plenty Bears was awesome fun, seeing how much enthusiasm, joy and great footy was on the field. Congratulations to the Eltham Panthers on their thrilling two-point victory and to both clubs on a fantastic contest and wonderful sportsmanship and sportswomanship. Thank you to everybody who continues to make all-abilities football an important part of our local sporting community. I would encourage everyone in the community to get down and have a watch of this game. You will never have more fun.

Kealba landfill

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Employment, Minister for Tourism) (10:03): I rise to share a huge win for my local community in Kealba. Today is a great day. The EPA on Monday announced that they have revoked Barro Group's operating licence for the Kealba landfill. This means that this landfill is permanently closed and closed for good. For years we have endured the smell and the frustration of having an industrial landfill right on our doorstep, with underground fires burning for years. I made a commitment that I would not stop until this landfill was closed for good, and I have consistently made strong representation, fighting every step of the way to the EPA, and recently passed on the community petitions of hundreds of locals to the Minister for Environment Enver Erdogan at the landfill. I want to thank the minister for being there and visiting and seeing it firsthand. We have always known the truth: a commercial landfill had no business being this close to our homes, our schools and our local businesses. The Barro Group have behaved like cowboys with complete disregard for my local community. To every person who signed the petition, showed up, called my office, stood with me and never backed down: thank you very much. This site continues to be remediated. It is now up to Brimbank City Council and the Barro Group to ensure the future of this land.

Kororoit electorate transport infrastructure

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (10:05): I have had the great honour of being the member for Kororoit for 1341 days, and during this time a lot has been achieved. The Hopkins Road level crossing bridge is now fully open, and the new 140 bus route is now operational in Mount Atkinson. Residents have told me how much of a game changer this really is. Instead of feeling isolated, they feel connected. One local mum messaged me to say how this bus has made it easier for her to drop her child off at child care, and another young man told me that this will mean that he does not have to rely on his parents to get to university. That is huge and the independence that every young person needs. In Deer Park we now have the 405 bus route connecting Deer Park station to Brimbank shopping centre, and yesterday we had a huge

announcement: the intersection between Leakes Road and the on and off ramps of the Western Freeway is finally getting lights. This will include a marked pedestrian crossing with signals. This will make this dangerous intersection so much safer, and words simply cannot explain the joy of the community when I let them know last night.

Thank you to the countless community members who have advocated for these important changes, particularly everyone at Leakes Needs Lights and the Mount Atkinson community residents group. All tiers of government have worked on this, from our local councillors to our federal local member Alice Jordan-Baird – a true community effort. We on this side will always get things done for the west, and we know that there is more to do. Thank you to the entire community for being part of this campaign. I look forward to continuing to work with you each and every day.

Housing affordability

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Cost of Living, Minister for Renters, Minister for Men and Boys) (10:06): Most Victorians buy a home once or twice in their lives. They save for years, they work out to the dollar what they can afford, they find a place advertised inside that number and they let themselves hope. They bid to the top of the advertised price and cross their fingers, and then the worst happens – the home gets passed in because there was another number all along and nobody told them. They lose their Saturday and hundreds if not thousands of dollars, and they lose that hope. But they get up the next Saturday, and they do it all again.

Underquoting has rigged this market for decades, and it is unlawful. That is why we established the underquoting taskforce, and that is why we are making it permanent, because you cannot police your way out of a system built to keep buyers guessing. So we are fixing the system itself. From 1 October the reserve must be published seven days before an auction. A room full of buyers who can actually afford the home is not a weaker auction, it is a fairer one. Buying a home is stressful enough without the reserve price being a mystery on top of everything else. And I say to those opposite: while we, the Carroll Labor government, are standing with homebuyers, the opposition want to keep the people of Victoria in the dark by keeping reserves secret. They need to ask themselves why they want to keep these numbers secret and why they are not on the side of homebuyers like the Labor government is.

Victoria Australia Samoa Seniors Inc

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:08): I was delighted to attend the VASSI, Victoria Australia Samoa Seniors Inc, seventh birthday celebration, which was all about community, culture and of course connection. The evening was filled with colour, laughter, excitement and a very vibrant fashion show as well as incredible music performances and full of cheers and smiles. It was really wonderful to see all the members, their families and their supporters all come together to celebrate seven years, which is such an incredible achievement. I must say VASSI hold a very strong place in my heart, and they certainly know how to party. Every time I walk through the door I am greeted with warmth, kindness and huge, generous smiles and a place of belonging. Whether it is taking part in their gentle exercise classes or enjoying a day of dancing, it is really clear that VASSI is much more than an organisation; it is a second family. Through attending their events I have seen firsthand the deep respect of the Samoan community of course for their elders. I want to say a huge shout-out to Susi, whose dedication, care and generosity have helped make it such an incredible event. She is always making sure everyone is happy, well fed and cared for. Congratulations, VASSI, on reaching this amazing, wonderful milestone.

Mornington Peninsula mental health services

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (10:09): I just want to thank Minister Staikos for coming down to my electorate to announce $2.1 million in funding for a dedicated assertive outreach team in the Mornington Peninsula. There were only going to be 12 assertive outreach teams, and I am so grateful that the minister decided to get one for the Mornington Peninsula. We really need it, and it is very much appreciated.

Bills

Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026

Statement of charter compatibility

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (10:11): Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility:

Opening paragraphs

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

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

Overview

The purpose of the Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026 (the Bill) is to establish a new workplace protection order (WPO) scheme in Victoria. A WPO is a civil order designed to protect persons who perform work at customer-facing retail and certain transport workplaces from people likely to engage in repeated acts of unacceptable conduct at those workplaces.

Applications for a WPO under the Bill may be made by retail operators, specific passenger train, tram and bus operators, or certain registered employee unions (where at least one of the workers at the workplace is, or is eligible to be, a member of the union).

A court may make a WPO if the respondent is of or over the age of 14 years and is not a worker at the workplace in question. The court must be satisfied that:

- the respondent has, within 12 months of the application being made, engaged in unacceptable conduct in relation to a person who performs work at the workplace of a retail or transport operator at their workplace
- the respondent is likely to engage in such unacceptable conduct again, and
- making the WPO is appropriate in all the circumstances.

For the purposes of the Bill, "unacceptable conduct" means physical or sexual violence or abuse, stalking, or conduct that causes a person to experience a reasonable fear of harm.

Subject to a range of safeguards outlined in further detail below, a court has broad discretion to impose any condition to a WPO. This may include restrictions on a person's access to the workplace or their contact with an individual worker.

A WPO may be in force for a maximum duration of 12 months, although a court may vary or revoke an order on application from a party to the WPO.

It will be an offence to contravene a condition of a WPO. The maximum penalty for the offence is 2 years imprisonment, a fine of up to 240 penalty units, or both.

Human Rights Issues

The Bill engages the following rights under the Charter:

- right to recognition and equality before the law (section 8)
- right to freedom of movement (section 12)
- right to privacy and reputation (section 13)
- right to peaceful assembly and freedom from association (section 16)
- right to take part in public life (section 18)
- right to freedom of expression (section 15)
- right to freedom of religion (section 14)
- right to culture (section 19).

In accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter, human rights can be subject under law to limits that are reasonable and demonstrably justifiable in a free and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom. Rights may be limited in order to protect other rights.

For the reasons discussed below, I consider that any limitations on rights resulting from this Bill are reasonable and demonstrably justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

Right to recognition and equality before the law (section 8)

Section 8(3) of the Charter provides that every person is equal before the law and is entitled to the equal protection of the law without discrimination. The purpose of the right to equality is to ensure that all laws and policies are applied equally, without a discriminatory effect.

Section 3(1) of the Charter adopts the definition of "discrimination" in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, which includes both direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of a protected attribute, such as race, disability and age. Indirect discrimination occurs where a person imposes a requirement, condition or practice that has, or is likely to have, the effect of disadvantaging persons with a protected attribute, but only where that requirement, condition or practice is not reasonable.

While the Bill applies universally to any person aged 14 years or older who engages in unacceptable conduct in a relevant workplace, I accept that the Bill engages the right to recognition and equality before the law because the practical consequences of a WPO condition could disadvantage persons with a protected attribute.

Crime statistics also show that First Peoples are overrepresented in the types of criminal offences that are likely to overlap with the WPO scheme, meaning they face an increased risk of becoming subject to a WPO and related contact with the criminal justice system.

However, I am of the view that the ability for a court to make a WPO is reasonable and justified as these provisions are directed at pursuing a pressing and legitimate objective of protecting persons that perform work at retail and transport workplaces from experiencing repeated acts of unacceptable conduct at those workplaces.

As noted, the Bill sets out clear criteria that the court must be satisfied of when making a WPO. In particular, the court must be satisfied that the respondent has, within the prior 12 months, engaged in unacceptable conduct in relation to a person who performs work at the workplace of a retail or transport operator and is likely to engage in such unacceptable conduct again. The criteria reflect, and is appropriately adapted to achieve, the stated purpose of the scheme.

Further, the Bill safeguards the rights of persons who may be disadvantaged by a WPO by:

- requiring the court to determine whether the making of a WPO is appropriate in all the circumstances
- specifying that a condition must not be imposed under a WPO if it would limit the rights and liberties of the respondent more than is necessary to prevent the respondent from engaging in unacceptable conduct (that is the court must ensure conditions are proportionate)
- specifying that a condition must not be imposed under a WPO if it would limit the respondent's ability to obtain necessary good or access necessary services unless the court is satisfied there is another way for the respondent to obtain those goods or access those services
- requiring the court to have regard to the respondent's ability to understand the nature and effect of the order and to comply with it where the respondent is a child or person with a cognitive impairment
- requiring the court to consider, when determining what conditions to impose in an order, any hardship that is likely to be caused by the imposition of a condition, and
- clarifying that a court may tailor conditions as it deems appropriate or necessary so that a condition can prohibiting the respondent from doing a thing either absolutely or only, or except, in specified circumstances or in a specified manner.

Accordingly, I am of the view that the right to equality may be engaged but is not limited by the Bill. However, even if the power to impose a WPO would limit this right, it would be limited only to the extent reasonably necessary to ensure that persons who perform work at retail and certain transport workplaces are protected from experiencing further unacceptable conduct in their workplace.

Right to freedom of movement (section 12)

Section 12 of the Charter provides that every person has the right to move freely within Victoria and has the freedom to choose where to live. The right extends, generally, to movement without impediment throughout the State, and a right of access to places and services used by members of the public (*DPP v Kaba* (2014) 44 VR 526, [100]).

I accept that the Bill may limit the right to freedom of movement by enabling the making of a WPO with a condition that restricts a person's ability to move freely within Victoria. For example, a condition prohibiting

a person from accessing a form of public transport or prohibiting a person from entering or being within a specified distance of a specified workplace.

However, I am of the view that any limitation on the right to freedom of movement is reasonable and can be demonstrably justified. As noted, the provisions providing for the making of a WPO, imposition of conditions and the offence of contravening a WPO, are necessary to ensure that persons performing work at retail and certain transport workplaces who experience persistent incidents of violence and abuse in the workplace are protected from experiencing further unacceptable conduct.

I am also satisfied that the test for making a WPO and safeguards – in particular, the requirement that a court must be satisfied that the making of a WPO is appropriate in all the circumstances, that conditions must be proportionate, and that a condition limit access to necessary goods or services may only be imposed if there is another way for the respondent to obtain those goods or access those services – ensure that freedom of movement is limited only to the extent necessary to protect persons that perform work at certain retail and transport workplaces against the harm of further unacceptable conduct.

As noted, the court has discretion to tailor conditions to provide that a person's access to a particular form of transport is not completely restricted. For example, it would be open to a court to tailor a condition so that the respondent is prohibited from accessing a specific transport workplace subject to specified exceptions, such as enabling access at specified times or for specified purposes. Similarly, it would also be open to a court to tailor a condition so that a person is prohibited from entering or coming within a specified distance of specified transport locations, such as prohibiting the respondent from entering a particular train station or from using a particular tram or bus line.

Further, if a WPO is made, and the respondent's circumstances change to such an extent that a condition of a WPO unduly limits the right to freedom of movement, the Bill allows a respondent of the WPO to apply to the court to vary or revoke the WPO, which may be granted at the court's discretion.

I have considered whether these provisions could be less restrictive by further narrowing the circumstances in which a WPO may be made, including by requiring a court to be satisfied that a respondent has been convicted of a violent offence against a person that performs work at a retail or transport workplace, or by limiting the scheme only to retail workplaces. However, I do not consider these options are reasonably available to achieve the Bill's purpose.

In my view, limiting the scheme to where an offence has already occurred would undermine the objectives of the Bill since it would fail to adequately protect persons that perform work at retail and transport workplaces from experiencing further unacceptable conduct that would fall short of violent offending. It would also fail to provide an additional mechanism to protect these workplaces during any period in which criminal investigations may remain ongoing. In cases, where a person has been charged and has not been remanded into custody, the Bill provides additional protection by ensuring that retail and transport operators have a means to seek appropriate conditions under a WPO. Further the Bill is appropriately tailored to addressing the protective purpose in these instances, by providing that a WPO may not be made for more than 12 months.

Limiting the scheme only to retail workplaces would also fail to achieve the purpose of protecting persons that perform work at certain transport workplaces.

For these reasons, I consider the approach taken in the Bill is the least restrictive means available to achieve the purpose of the Bill.

Right to privacy and reputation (section 13)

Section 13(a) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. Section 13(a) contains internal limitations that permit lawful and non-arbitrary interference with a person's privacy. Interference with privacy will be arbitrary if it is capricious, unpredictable, unjust or unreasonable (*Minogue v Thompson* [2021] VSCA 358, [55]).

As noted, the Bill enables an application for a WPO to be made by a relevant retail or transport operator or an employee union in certain circumstances. This promotes the right to privacy and reputation by providing an alternative to workers that are the victim of unacceptable conduct from having to personally apply for a WPO or otherwise seek protections under other existing mechanisms, such as by applying for a personal safety intervention order, which would require the worker to reveal personal information such as their name and address.

However, the Bill also requires the sharing of information about a respondent, and potentially, victims of unacceptable conduct, with retail and transport operators who are not party to an application in certain circumstances. Specifically, an employee union is required to identify and give notice of an application for a WPO to any retail or transport operator that would be entitled to apply for a WPO by providing a copy of the application, and to provide a copy of an order under the Bill to any operator that was notified of the application. In addition, the Bill requires that a copy of an order be given to the Chief Commissioner of Police. These

provisions limit the right to privacy of any persons named in those documents – in particular the respondent but possibly also any victim to the extent they are also identified – including the right to control one's informational privacy and the right to not have their reputation unlawfully attacked.

I consider the notification and service requirements in the Bill are appropriate and necessary promote the effective operation of the WPO scheme and are thereby appropriately tailored to the Bill's purpose. In particular, the requirements:

- support enforcement of the WPO, and investigations and prosecution for contravention of the WPO by ensuring police are aware when a WPO is made, and
- ensure that relevant operators are aware of applications that may impact their workplace and are able to assist with the detection of any contravention of a WPO and therefore supporting the effective enforcement of a WPO.

These provisions are also sufficiently circumscribed to ensure that any interference with the right to privacy is not arbitrary, unpredictable or unreasonable within the internal limitations contained in section 13(a) of the Charter.

Right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief (section 14) and cultural rights (section 19)

Section 14 of the Charter protects the right to freedom of religion and belief. This includes the right to demonstrate one's religion or belief, in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

The right to culture in section 19(1) ensures individuals, in community with others that share their background, can enjoy their culture, declare and practice their religion and use their language.

I accept that the Bill has the potential to interfere with a person's right to freedom of religion and their right to culture, to the extent that a condition imposed under a WPO may restrict a respondent's ability to observe their religious practices or express their culture in certain circumstances. For example, a condition that limits a person's means of travel may effectively restrict them from accessing a location where the respondent wishes to engage in worship and prayer or enjoy their culture. Similarly, a condition prohibiting a person from coming within a certain distance of a retail workplace, could effectively exclude that person from entering a place of worship that falls within that area. Further, a condition that prohibits a person from entering a specified retail workplace may restrict their ability to purchase items required for cultural and religious ceremonies, such as food, clothing and other ceremonial objects.

However, I am of the view that any limitation of the right to freedom of religion and cultural rights is reasonable and can be demonstrably justified. As noted, the Bill is directed at responding to the legitimate objective of protecting persons that perform work at retail and transport workplaces from experiencing further unacceptable conduct. In addition, the test for making a WPO and the various safeguards set out above ensure that any limitation placed on the right to freedom of religion and right to culture are reasonable and proportionate.

I have considered whether a less restrictive approach could be to include an exception or defence to the offence of contravening a WPO where a person is travelling to, or entering, a place they are otherwise prohibited from entering, for religious or cultural reasons. However, I do not consider this option to be reasonably available. In my view, such a provision would undermine the objective of the Bill to promote the safety of persons that perform work at certain retail and transport workplaces and to prevent the occurrence of unacceptable conduct towards those persons in circumstances where reasonable transport or retail alternatives may be available and the court considers the conditions imposed are no more restrictive than is necessary to prevent the respondent from engaging in unacceptable conduct.

I therefore consider that the approach taken in the Bill is the least restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose of the Bill.

Rights to freedom of expression (section 15), peaceful assembly and freedom of association (section 16)

Section 15(2) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds through a variety of mediums. The right contains an internal limitation in section 15(3) that allows freedom of expression to be limited where it is reasonably necessary to respect the rights and reputation of other persons, or for the protection of national security, public order, public health or public morality. Relevantly, the protection of public order 'means, in broad terms, giving effect to rights or obligations that facilitate the proper functioning of the rule of law … include[ing] measures for peace and good order, public safety and prevention of disorder and crime' (*Magee v Delaney* (2012) 39 VR 50, [151].

Section 16 of the Charter protects every person's right to peaceful assembly, that is to gather intentionally and temporarily for a specific purpose, and right to freedom of association with others.

I accept that the Bill has the potential to interfere with a person's right to freedom of expression. For example, a condition prohibiting a respondent from entering or coming within a specified distance of a specific workplace, may interfere with the respondent's ability to engage in public protest regarding the practices of that workplace or in the vicinity of that workplace. However, for the reasons that follow, I consider that any interference falls within the internal limit of section 15(3) with the limitations imposed being reasonable and necessary to protect the rights of others (that is, persons that perform work at the relevant retail or transport workplace) and to uphold public order.

The power to make a WPO and the offence for contravening a WPO are necessary to protect public order as they will provide a targeted mechanism to deter members of the public from repeatedly engaging in violence and other types of unacceptable conduct against persons that already experience violence and abuse in certain retail and transport workplaces.

The potential interference on the right to freedom of expression is reasonable for the following reasons:

- The Bill is directed at preventing persons from further engaging in acts of unacceptable conduct against persons that perform work at certain customer-facing retail and transport workplaces and are not designed to restrict any specific form of expression protected by section 15 of the Charter.
- As previously noted, the Bill contains various safeguards that ensure any limitations placed on the right to freedom of expression are appropriate in all the circumstances, proportionate, and the least restrictive possible.
- The offence for contravention of a WPO is narrow and may only be enlivened when the respondent intentionally breaches any of the conditions set out in the order.

Similarly, I accept that a condition prohibiting a respondent from entering or coming within a specified distance of a specific workplace may engage a person's rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of association. Those rights would be limited in the protest example above but could also be limited where the respondent is unable to meet with a group or association within the specified distance of the workplace. In addition, prohibiting a respondent from using a specific public transport service may indirectly restrict a person's rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of association if there is no alternative mode of transport available for them to attend a particular assembly or gathering of a particular group. Similarly, a condition prohibiting a respondent from communicating with a protected worker may limit the person's freedom to associate with that worker as part of a broader group to which they both belong.

However, as noted with respect to the right to freedom of expression, these provisions are not specifically aimed at preventing persons from gathering peacefully or associating with others as part of a formal group. Instead, as noted above, these provisions are directed at responding to the legitimate objective of protecting persons that perform work at certain retail and transport workplaces from experiencing further unacceptable conduct and the test for making a WPO is appropriately adapted to this purpose. The Bill, as previously noted, also contains various safeguards to ensure that any limitations placed on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and freedom of association are appropriate in all the circumstances, proportionate, and the least restrictive possible. In particular, the court has the discretion to tailor conditions to be subject to exceptions – such as to enable a person to come within a specified distance of a workplace to attend a specified gathering or assembly, or to communicate with protected workers for a specified purpose. The Bill also does not allow for the application of a WPO for the purpose of preventing a person from picketing or engaging in on-the-job protests or industrial action related to, or at, their workplace.

I have also considered whether a less restrictive approach to these rights may be to include an exception or defence to the offence of contravening a WPO where a person breaches a condition whilst engaging in political communication or legitimate protest. However, I do not consider this option to be reasonably available as, in my view, it would undermine the objective of the Bill to promote safety of persons that perform work at retail and transport workplaces.

The court will be required to be satisfied that conditions imposed in a WPO are no more restrictive than necessary to prevent the respondent from engaging in unacceptable conduct and may itself tailor a condition so that it is subject to exceptions.

I consider that the Bill's approach does not provide further restrictions than necessary to fulfil the purpose of the Bill and the approach taken is the least restrictive means available to achieve the purpose of the Bill. For the reasons outlined above, any interference with the right to freedom of expression is in my view incidental only, lawful and reasonably necessary for the protection of public order. For similar reasons, I consider that any limitation on the right to peaceful assembly would be reasonable and justified.

Right to take part in public life (section 18)

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

representatives. Section 18(2) further provides that every eligible person has the right to vote and be elected at periodic State and municipal elections that guarantee the free expression of the will of the electors, and have access, on general terms of equality, to the Victorian public service and public office.

I accept that the Bill has the potential to limit a respondent's right to take part in public life, to the extent that a condition in a WPO prohibits, for example, a person from using certain transport to attend or take part in a political forum, or to attend a voting centre. Similarly, a condition prohibiting a person from coming within a specified distance of a workplace that is next to, for example, a voting centre or council building may also limit the right to take part in public life.

For similar reasons as noted above with respect to the right to recognition and equality before the law, a WPO condition may also indirectly discriminate against a person with a protected attribute from taking part in public life. For example, a person who is unable to drive a motor vehicle due to their age or disability may be disproportionately impacted in their ability to participate in local council meetings or take part in parliamentary and municipal elections if a condition of a WPO prohibits them from using certain transport.

However, as explained in the context of the right to equality, I am of the view that the provisions in the Bill that may impact this right are reasonable and proportionate to pursue the pressing and legitimate objective of protecting persons that perform work at certain retail and transport workplaces from experiencing repeated acts of unacceptable conduct at those workplaces.

The Bill also contains various safeguards to ensure that any limitation placed on the right to take part in public life is the least restrictive possible and provides for the ability to vary a WPO if there is a change in circumstances.

Accordingly, I am of the view that should the power to impose a WPO limit this right, it would be limited to the extent reasonably necessary to ensure that persons that perform work at certain retail and transport workplaces are protected from experiencing further unacceptable conduct in the workplace.

Conclusion

I am therefore of the view that the Bill is compatible with the Charter.

The Hon. Sonya Kilkenny MP
Attorney-General

Statement of treaty compatibility

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (10:11): Under the Statewide Treaty Act 2025, I table a statement of treaty compatibility:

1. In my opinion, the Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026 (Bill) is compatible with the matters set out in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* (the Treaty Act). I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the Bill

2. The purpose of the Bill is to establish a new workplace protection order (WPO) scheme in Victoria. A WPO is a civil order designed to protect persons who perform work at customer-facing retail and certain transport workplaces from people likely to engage in repeated acts of unacceptable conduct at those workplaces.
3. Applications for a WPO under the Bill may be made by retail operators, specific passenger train, tram and bus operators, or employee unions (where at least one of the workers at the workplace is, or is eligible to be, a member of the union).
4. A court may make a WPO if the respondent is aged 14 years or older and is not a worker at the workplace in question. The court must be satisfied that the respondent has, within the prior 12 months, engaged in unacceptable conduct in relation to a worker at the workplace in question and is likely to engage in such unacceptable conduct again, and that making the WPO is appropriate in all the circumstances.
5. For the purposes of the Bill, "unacceptable conduct" means physical violence or abuse, sexual violence or abuse, stalking, or conduct that causes a person to experience a reasonable fear of harm.
6. Subject to a range of safeguards outlined in further detail below, a court has a broad discretion to impose any conditions under a WPO to prevent the respondent from engaging in unacceptable conduct in relation to a person performing work at the relevant workplace. This may include restrictions on a person's access to the workplace or their contact with an individual worker.

7. The Bill provides that any party to a WPO may apply to vary or revoke the order. A WPO may be in force for a maximum duration of 12 months, although it may be varied or revoked earlier.

8. It will be an offence to contravene a condition of a WPO. The offence will be punishable by up to 2 years imprisonment, a fine of up to 240 penalty units, or both.

Consultation with the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl

9. The First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl (Assembly) was provided with information regarding the Bill and an opportunity to advise on the Bill in June 2026. In July 2026, the Assembly accepted a briefing on the Bill in which information was provided on the Bill and its impacts on First Peoples. I note that, respecting Cabinet processes, the Bill itself was not provided during this briefing. Following this briefing, the Assembly provided a representation as follows:

   9.1 The First Peoples' Assembly was not provided with a copy of the Bill. The Assembly understands that extensive feedback was provided by First Peoples experts and organisations to the State and that the substantive concerns raised have not been addressed. The Assembly has significant concerns about the disproportionate impact that the Workplace Protection Order scheme may have on First Peoples.

10. I note that, as highlighted through engagement with First Peoples experts and organisations, the Bill may have a disproportionate impact on First Peoples. As detailed in the compatibility assessment below, these concerns have been considered, and the Bill has been adapted to include some measures and safeguards in response to these concerns. However, I acknowledge that not all aspects of the Bill align with the concerns raised regarding its potential impacts on First Peoples. I note that the State will continue to work with First Peoples in the implementation of these reforms.

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

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

    (i) advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples; and

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

    (iii) ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples.

12. I note that the Bill does not include any provisions which apply specifically to First Peoples. The Bill establishes a civil order (WPO) scheme and associated criminal offence for breach of a WPO with universal application. A WPO will apply equally to any person aged 14 years or older who has engaged in unacceptable conduct against a retail or transport worker at their workplace and is the subject of such an order made by the court. Similarly, the offence will apply equally to any person subject to a WPO.

13. However, the Bill may, in its practical effects, engage the objects of section 66(3)(d) of the Treaty Act in two key ways.

14. First, the creation of the new WPO scheme will enable courts to impose restrictive conditions on persons subject to a WPO, which are likely to impact the interests, rights and freedoms of First Peoples subject to a WPO. There is a risk that First Peoples will be disproportionately the subject of WPOs given their overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. While the imposition of a WPO does not rely on a person having been convicted of a criminal offence, it does rely on a court being satisfied that a person has engaged in unacceptable conduct that, in some cases, may also amount to one of a range of criminal offences. Crime statistics data shows First Peoples are overrepresented as alleged offenders for such relevant offences (including physical and sexual assault offences, threatening behaviour, offensive conduct, stalking, riot and affray) recorded at retail and certain transport locations. First Peoples account for over 12% of alleged offenders for relevant offences recorded at those locations during the period from July 2022 to December 2025 despite representing less than 2% of the Victorian population.

15. Second, the Bill also creates a new criminal offence for contravention of a condition of a WPO which will be punishable by a maximum penalty of 2 years imprisonment, a fine of up to 240 penalty units, or both. This may lead to prosecution and custodial sentences, which risk further increasing First Peoples overrepresentation in custody. Given that WPOs may be made against any person aged 14 or older, there is also a risk that the new offence will increase the number of young First Peoples persons in detention or otherwise engaged with the criminal justice system.

Advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples

16. I acknowledge that the making of a WPO in relation to First Peoples that imposes restrictions via conditions on an individual, and enforcement of the order via the new offence for failure to comply with

a WPO, will necessarily restrict an individual's right to fully exercise some inherent rights of First Peoples as outlined in the United Nations Declaration into the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

17. The Bill may, in practice, limit the right to equality and freedom from discrimination (article 2, UNDRIP) due to the potential for the scheme to disproportionately apply to First Peoples. Conditions that restrict or prevent access to particular forms of public transport, the purchase of necessary goods, or access to necessary services, and the potential to be imprisoned if those conditions are breached, may also impact a range of inherent rights of First Peoples. In particular, the rights to improvement of economic and social conditions (article 5, UNDRIP), the rights and special needs of elders, women, young people, and persons with a disability (article 22, UNDRIP), the right to education without discrimination (article 14, UNDRIP) and the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (article 24, UNDRIP) may be affected.

18. Limiting First Peoples' access to retail premises or public transport risks significant disruption to social and economic opportunities, particularly in regional and rural settings where alternatives are limited. This may present barriers to key aspects of First Peoples' lives including access to cultural connections and Country, employment, education, healthcare and housing and risk particular impacts on vulnerable groups such as elders, women, young people, and persons with a disability. Rights to culture and Country (articles 11, 12, 25 and 26, UNDRIP) may also be impacted; limiting First Peoples' practical access to places of spiritual significance, cultural practices and cultural connections.

19. However, taking into account the above considerations, in my opinion the Bill is nevertheless compatible with the object of advancing the inherent rights of First Peoples. Preventing unacceptable conduct in relation to workers of retail and certain transport operators is important, and I acknowledge efforts to address it will impact upon the rights of First Peoples. However, as detailed in the proportionality assessment below, safeguards contained in the Bill, as well as judicial discretion, will aim to ensure any impacts on the inherent rights of First Peoples are no more restrictive than necessary.

Addressing unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples

20. The creation of a new civil order containing conditions that will restrict where a person may go and how they can travel may compound the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation.

21. As detailed above, there are risks that WPOs imposing conditions limiting access to transportation or retail premises can have far-reaching implications for First Peoples' access to employment, education, healthcare, housing, cultural connections and Country. These impacts may be particularly pronounced by the application of the scheme not just to adults, but also to children aged 14 and above.

22. As detailed in the *Yoorrook for Transformation* report, the Yoorrook Justice Commission (the Commission) 'received evidence about the ongoing presence of racism towards First Peoples across all societal institutions', impacting access to a range of social and economic opportunities on interpersonal, institutional and systemic or structural levels. Systemic racism and unconscious bias have a significant impact on the over-representation of First Peoples in the criminal justice system, and this is reflected in concerns raised by stakeholders during development of the Bill. First Peoples experience significant racism in retail and transport settings relevant to WPOs, and this may drive biased interpretations of unacceptable conduct and disproportionate applications for WPOs in relation to First Peoples. In this context, there is a risk that First Peoples will be disproportionately subject to WPOs, amplifying the broad-ranging impacts that associated conditions may have.

23. Further, to the extent that the new offence introduced by this Bill may lead to increased contact with the criminal justice systems, the increased rates of incarceration of First Peoples may compound the unacceptable disadvantage further. The *Yoorrook for Justice* report considered the significant impact of First Peoples over-representation in the justice system, including the disruptions to family and the community when people are imprisoned. The report notes that '[r]emoving [First Peoples] from their community can have devastating effects on their personal and social wellbeing, with many families experiencing ongoing trauma and grief as a result.'

24. However, taking into account the above considerations, in my opinion the Bill is nevertheless compatible with the object of addressing the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation. The objectives of the Bill are to promote the safety and security of persons working at certain workplaces, and to prevent the occurrence of unacceptable conduct in those workplaces. However, as detailed in the proportionality assessment below, the safeguards contained in the Bill intend to mitigate negative impacts of the scheme on First Peoples. Judicial discretion will also operate to ensure the conditions of a WPO will not limit the rights and responsibilities of a person more than is necessary.

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

25. While the Bill applies universally to any person aged 14 years or older who engages in unacceptable conduct in a relevant workplace, I acknowledge that the Bill may, in practice, limit the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms of First Peoples. As detailed above, crime statistics show that First Peoples are overrepresented in the types of criminal offences that are likely to overlap with this scheme, meaning they face an increased risk of becoming subject to a WPO and related contact with the criminal justice system.

26. Specifically, I consider that the Bill may indirectly limit the equal enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms including inherent rights previously outlined and the Charter rights to liberty (section 21), freedom of movement (section 12), right to privacy (section 13(a)), the rights to enjoy cultural rights (sections and 19), the protection of families and children (section 17), as well as the right to adequate standard of living, adequate food, clothing and housing (article 11 of the ICESCR).

27. These rights may be limited as a result of conditions included in a WPO, or the imposition of a custodial sentence following a breach. As noted above, the conditions of a WPO and potential for imprisonment or detention following the breach of such conditions can restrict movement and have other flow on implications for on connections to family, kin and culture, access to Country and enjoyment of various rights as well as restrict access to goods. In circumstances where First Peoples are subject to disproportionate rates of WPOs and potentially related detention, this may limit the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples.

28. However, taking into account the above considerations, in my opinion the Bill is nevertheless compatible with the object of ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples. The importance of preventing unacceptable conduct in relation to workers of retail and certain transport operators through the restrictive conditions in a WPO must be balanced with an individual's personal circumstances. As detailed in the proportionality assessment below, safeguards provided for in the Bill, such as requiring a court to only impose conditions that are appropriate in all the circumstances, will to help ensure First peoples are not disproportionately impacted.

Proportionality assessment

29. While the Bill may limit the achievement of the objects in section 66(3)(d)(i)–(iii) as outlined above, in my opinion the limitations are proportionate and therefore compatible with them for the reasons outlined below.

30. The Bill universally applies to any person aged 14 years or older who engages in unacceptable conduct in a workplace and not specifically or only to First Peoples.

31. There is significant and pressing need to increase protections for retail and certain transport workers in their workplaces from people likely to engage in repeated incidents of unacceptable conduct at those workplaces. The imposition of restrictive conditions under a WPO, as well as potential criminal sanctions for breaching an order, seek to prevent further unacceptable conduct in these workplaces. It is intended that the conditions and potential criminal sanctions will have a protective purpose, and any limitations on rights as a result are appropriate given the significant harm caused by the unacceptable conduct the Bill denounces.

32. The Bill acknowledges the potential significant impact that a WPO may have on individuals and requires that a court may only make a WPO where it is satisfied that it is appropriate in all the circumstances. This is intended to ensure that orders are only made with due consideration of a respondent's personal circumstances. Additionally, courts can only impose conditions that are targeted and proportionate to the protective purpose of the order in those circumstances. This aims to ensure any such conditions are appropriately tailored to both protect workers from repeated acts of unacceptable conduct and reduce the impact on disadvantaged and marginalised communities by requiring the court to consider a respondent's personal circumstances, including the key factors detailed below. This safeguard will be particularly important in rural, regional and remote communities where alternative transport or retail options may be limited, or where WPO conditions may be unduly burdensome on a person, allowing for courts to consider the impacts on fundamental freedoms and rights described above.

33. In determining the conditions to be included in a WPO, the court must give paramount consideration to the safety and protection of the workers in the workplace but must also have regard to other factors, such as the hardship that is likely to be caused to any person. Critically, the Bill provides that a court must not impose a condition under a WPO where:

    a. the condition would limit the respondent's ability to obtain necessary goods or access necessary services, unless the court is satisfied there is another way for the respondent to obtain those goods or access those services; or

b. the condition limits the rights of the respondent more than is necessary to prevent a respondent from engaging in unacceptable conduct that has a sufficient connection to the workplace.

34. In addition, an application for a WPO must be made within 12 months of the relevant unacceptable conduct. This ensures that any order made responds to an existing risk posed by a person and that historic conduct cannot be used to form the sole basis of a WPO application.

35. Further, in determining whether to make a WPO in relation to a child or a person with a cognitive impairment, the court must have regard to further considerations including the respondent's ability to understand the nature and effect of the order and ability to comply with it.

36. The Bill recognises that the needs and impacts of a person subject to a WPO can change over time. Consequently, at any time during the duration of the WPO, the applicant or respondent may apply to the court to vary the conditions of a WPO or revoke a WPO. Upon application, the court may vary or revoke a WPO where satisfied it is appropriate in all the circumstances to do so and having regard to a range of matters, including: the applicant's reasons for making the application; any hardship or harm that is likely to be caused as a result of any variation or revocation; and the likelihood that the respondent may engage in further unacceptable conduct that has a sufficient connection to the operator if the WPO is not varied or revoked. This will give the court an opportunity to consider any change in circumstances, such that the conditions of the WPO should be varied.

37. Finally, the Bill requires the Attorney-General to commence a review of the scheme within three years of its commencement. This will ensure that the new scheme is working as intended to promote the safety of customer-facing retail and certain transport workers and will enable government to consider the broader impacts of the reforms, including on First Peoples.

Conclusion

38. For the reasons set out above, in my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the objects specified in section 66(3)(d)(i) to (iii) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025.*

The Hon. Sonya Kilkenny MP
Attorney-General

Second reading

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (10:11): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Incorporated speech as follows:

I am pleased to introduce the Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026. The Bill complements the *Crimes Amendment (Retail, Fast Food, Hospitality and Transport Worker Harm) Act 2025* to deliver on the Victorian Government's commitment to give vulnerable customer-facing workers greater protection against assaults, threats and abuse.

The Bill creates a new workplace protection order scheme to address unacceptable conduct – such as violence, sexual abuse, stalking or threats towards staff – in retail and certain transport workplaces. While a workplace protection order, or WPO as it will be informally known, will be a civil mechanism for preventing harm, breaches of a condition of a WPO will carry a significant criminal consequence of up to two years imprisonment, a fine of up to approximately $50,000, or both.

Retail and passenger transport workers are vital to a thriving Victorian community. The retail industry contributes over 73 billion dollars to the Victorian economy annually, while more than 490 million trips were recorded across the Victorian public transport network in 2025. These workers keep our economy growing and keep us moving around our state safely. However, they often experience violence, abuse and harassment just for doing their job.

The purpose of this Bill is to protect retail and specified transport workers from people likely to engage in repeated acts of unacceptable violence, abuse, stalking and other harassment. The introduction of a WPO scheme safeguards retail and specified transport workers by limiting a person's access to a workplace and/or workers where that person is likely to engage in repeated acts of unacceptable conduct at the workplace. This sends a clear message to the community that the work of retail and passenger transport workers is valued and that it is never okay to abuse or threaten these workers just for doing their job.

I shall now turn to the substance of the Bill.

Applications for a WPO under the Bill may be made by retail operators, specific passenger train, tram and bus operators, or certain registered employee unions (where at least one of the workers at the workplace is, or is eligible to be, a member of the union). A union applicant may seek a WPO independently of a retail or transport operator allowing it to step in where a retail or transport operator is unable or unwilling to apply for a WPO. A union applying for a WPO must notify any other eligible applicant of its intention to apply.

A WPO may be made in relation to a person aged 14 years or above if the court is satisfied that the person has engaged in unacceptable conduct in connection with a retail or specified transport workplace within the previous 12 months, is likely to do so again, and the order is appropriate in all the circumstances.

Unacceptable conduct means physical violence or abuse, sexual violence or abuse, stalking and conduct that causes a person at the workplace to experience a reasonable fear of harm.

A WPO can only be sought for unacceptable conduct that occurs at a workplace covered by the scheme. A retail workplace is a place where a retail operator conducts its business all or part of which is accessible to the public during business hours. For transport operators, the definition of workplace is limited to passenger trains, trams and buses, ticket sales locations and ticketed-access areas owned or operated by the transport operator, such as a train station platform.

Government recognises the need to ensure WPOs are appropriately targeted and proportionate to their protective purpose. To safeguard against potential disproportionate impacts on vulnerable Victorians, the scheme provides various considerations the court must undertake when making a WPO. For example, if the respondent is a child or person with a cognitive impairment the court must consider their ability to understand an order and comply with its conditions. In determining any conditions under a WPO, the court must give paramount consideration to the safety and protection of the workers in the workplace but must also have regard to other factors, such as the hardship that is likely to be caused to any person.

Further, a court must not impose a condition that would limit the respondent's ability to obtain necessary good or access necessary services if there are no alternative options to access such goods or services, or if it would limit rights and liberties of the person more than is necessary. The court therefore has discretion to determine and tailor any conditions as it deems appropriate or necessary.

For example, retail and transport options may be limited in regional, rural and remote areas. If an applicant suggests a condition that would exclude a person from obtaining essential items such as food or medicine, the court may decide it is not appropriate to make the order due to the hardship this would cause the respondent, or may tailor the condition to restrict access to the relevant workplace except at specified hours or otherwise to impose alternative conditions.

A WPO may be in force for a maximum duration of 12 months. The applicant or the respondent to the WPO may apply to the court to have the WPO revoked, or the conditions of the order varied. This gives the court the opportunity to consider any changes in circumstances that may have occurred to ensure that the conditions of the order remain appropriate and targeted to effectively promote protection and safety of the relevant protected workers.

Government will monitor the impact of the WPO scheme by requiring a statutory review of the reforms be commenced within three years from the commencement of the reforms. This is a novel scheme, and the statutory review will provide an opportunity to consider whether the new scheme is working as intended and to consider the broader impacts of the reforms.

Customer-facing workers in the retail and transport industries provide essential services to our society and it is unacceptable that they are made to feel unsafe simply for doing their job.

I acknowledge the valuable contribution of the Worker Protection Consultation Group, whose expertise, experience and ongoing commitment have been instrumental in the development of these reforms.

The Victorian Government remains committed to protecting workplaces and I am pleased to introduce this Bill that further strengthens our justice system to protect workers from harm.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (10:11): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Thursday 13 August.

Corrections Amendment Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Paul Hamer:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Corrections) (10:12): Under standing orders I wish to advise the house of amendments to this bill, and I request that they be circulated.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (10:13): I rise in relation to the Corrections Amendment Bill 2026 and also the amendments that have just been placed on the record by the Minister for Corrections. First and foremost, our position is that we will not be opposing this bill today on the corrections amendments. Obviously this bill was brought into this place because of, as I understand, legal action in relation to open-air and restricted access for prisoners in Victoria to ensure that they can get reasonable access to the outdoors. Offenders that are locked up for longer periods of time or who are getting locked down for days, whether it is for penalties, punishment or whatever else – for some of them it is for security reasons – can be locked up for 23 hours a day. What this says, effectively, is that they have already got a human right to access to open air but obviously with current restrictions and challenges within the system that is not always practical for staff. So the bill put forward today from the minister is in relation to ensuring that there are protections as well as understanding of the circumstances within our prison system.

I suppose that is where I will start. The corrections and prison system here in Victoria faces many challenges. Some of those challenges are specifically around staffing, which has been raised with me on many occasions. I speak to a few of the corrections officers and have spoken to corrections officers, current and former, who have raised some of the issues that they are facing within the system and their concerns around the staffing levels that have been raised over a long period of time. I know that the government are well and truly aware of some of the pressures that are placed on prison officers here in Victoria, particularly when they are short staffed. Because of safety concerns, the last thing anyone wants to see is a prison getting extra inmates coming in at the same time it is not seeing an increase in or the movement around of staff and that placing the staff at risk.

The staff that are reaching out to us have indicated an increase in assaults, an increase in threats and an increase in lockdowns within the prison. When we look at the prisons and we see the fact that the prisoners are being locked down for longer periods of time, whilst the community probably do not have a lot of sympathy for those that get locked down for a longer period of time due to staffing, the challenge there is actually back on the staff, because when you do lock down prisoners, you end up with a group of people who are generally a bit more angry and a bit harder to manage, and working in a prison system is about management. It is about managing the prisons. There are the arguments around rehabilitation et cetera, which are separate to this, but this is really just about the staffing and ensuring that they are protected and that we have got the best access and availability for them.

One of the challenges I think that the government should be addressing when they talk about this is that we have known for a while that crime has been increasing here in Victoria, and the government in 2023 changed the bail laws, which saw less people going into the prison system. And we have seen sentencing change – less people are getting prison sentences since 2023. Since the increase in crime, the government have now come out with their so-called tough-on-crime approach, and that tough-on-crime approach that they are talking about now is swinging back around to seeing more people incarcerated, particularly those that are getting remanded here in Victoria. I know the government will pat themselves on the back and say, 'How good are we? We're tough on crime.' But if they had not changed the laws in 2023, there is a very high likelihood that we would not have seen the increase in crime that we have seen in Victoria, because there would have been serious consequences at the time, and therefore we would not have seen this chain where particularly younger men have gone through

and continue to increase the amount of crime they do, more violent crime, and end up going onto a path of longer term sentences because of the crimes they are committing.

At the time when the government were weakening the bail laws here in Victoria and we saw sentencing change so more people were being freed out into the community, particularly dangerous criminals who were ending up back out in the community, the government made, I will say, a very bad decision, and that decision was to close Port Phillip Prison based on the fact of numbers. They spent billions on Western Plains prison. They were spending $33 million to $34 million a year to keep Western Plains prison empty. Effectively, they were air conditioning cells that had no prisoners in them. As we all know, money does not grow on trees, and that was an absolute waste. The government continued to see this money being put into a facility that had no prisoners in it. It had staff, and for obvious reasons – I will say it is obvious – you have to have staff in there, even if there are no prisoners, because you need to make sure that the prison does stay as secure as possible.

After a period of time, when the government started to feel the pressure – and I suppose, in the words of the new Premier, when they were reacting to polling rather than the reality of what was happening in the system and they were worried about community sentiment rather than about the actual safety of the prison officers in the prison system – they decided then to move prisoners across to Western Plains. The call was made to close Port Phillip. Let us be honest: that was a purely ideological position to close down a private prison here in this state – a prison that was more effective, was more efficient, had better outcomes, had safer staff, had less incidents and cost less to run. Every single report would say why they should have kept that one open rather than moving the prisoners across. When they made the decision to move them across to Western Plains prison, the government also decided they were going to, at that time, close down the entire prison. But afterwards, again, due to backlash, they realised that they had spent so many tens of millions of dollars on a hospital facility within Port Phillip that they had to go back and renegotiate a contract with G4S to keep that section of the prison open, because they do need to have a place to put prisoners who need health care within the system. Let us be honest, it was one of the better places to put people, particularly at end of life. It was again more efficient and more effective. The government also at the time were negotiating contracts with St Vincent's around the secure ward that is currently here in Melbourne. All of these things have led effectively to the government having spent a lot more money to get a lot less outcomes, and now they are struggling to get more staff.

We have spoken to a few of the staff that were made redundant and moved on from the Port Phillip Prison. Believe it or not, there are a few of them that cannot get jobs in the public sector. The public sector is desperate to get prison officers in, but they are not speaking to those that have been made redundant from the private sector. They would be great conversations because some of them would raise some issues around the fact that they have been told that they were too involved with the private sector and that they would not know how it runs in the public sector. But most of them within that system could have come across and actually been great mentors in the public sector. The reason I say that is because you did see in the private sector with the prison system how efficiently and how effectively it was run. They had less lockdowns. If you have less lockdowns, you have less risk of being in breach of human rights and having people going out of their cells. They also held some of the highest risk prisoners in the state. They had wards there for people who were unsentenced but were a risk to the community. The prison itself, as I said, had a lot of things going for it that were positives that this government over time has failed to address.

The other issue we hear from prison officers still in the system is that this bill does not really address – and I know it goes in here about permanent exemptions – the charter of human rights, but it is partially compatible with the Statewide Treaty. Partially compatible is always a concern. This government brought in a treaty that they swore by. They said our side was totally wrong for opposing all the decisions in there, but since then the pieces of legislation that I have seen come in: one they did not even go through the treaty with, and the second one here is only partially compatible. So we are spending a lot of money on the treaty for them to come in and make decisions and have a say, and then

when they do disagree with government, the government just goes, 'We're not going to listen to you anyway.' They have obviously put in here that it is partially compatible with the Statewide Treaty.

Natalie Hutchins interjected.

Brad BATTIN: I do not support the treaty. That was pretty obvious; we have already voted on that one. But the government who pushed it through, you would think, would listen to the treaty. I know the former minister wants to make comments from the back. She must be disappointed. I am sure the former minister is disappointed in the fact that the treaty has had its say and the government that she was part of then turned around and went, 'But we're not going to listen to them. We're going to spend all the money on them, but we're not going to listen to them.' They can put forward their views – that is fantastic – but the government who supported them and spent all the money on it are not going to be listening to them at a later date.

Some of the prison officers who I have been speaking to have been raising concerns around the risks to them and the treatment of some of the prisoners within their system. Now we are seeing more and more prisoners who are getting treated, I am going to say as good as, if not better than, people out in the community. We have seen recent reports – I know everybody knows about the Ozempic reports and availability of Ozempic in the prison system and who can access it. People who are within the prison system do not have to be prediabetic, but they can get it and not have to fund it. It has got to be paid for by taxpayer, so taxpayers are paying for Ozempic. Some of those people that have gone in there – I will not say they were overweight when they went in – have developed that and become overweight, and all of a sudden they have access to Ozempic that people in the community cannot afford. So people who are outside of jail cannot afford it, but people who are inside get it gifted to them. I think that is a huge problem here in this state.

Also, when I am talking about people who are in there using Ozempic as a way to lose weight, I would say to most of them and to the prison system: change the system. Use a prescription and tell them to maybe do some exercise, because I can tell you, I have worked in a prison and if there is one thing prisoners have, it is time. They have got plenty of time. Send them to the gym. If there is a problem with an excess number of Victorian prisoners putting on too much weight, change the food. The government is in charge of that. The government can go through and ensure that the diet is amended in there. When I worked down in Won Wron prison, the prisoners were the ones that, obviously, cooked down there. We had a head chef who was a prison officer, and we had the rest that were cooking. But the food down there was exceptional – healthy. It was unbelievable what they did. Over time we have changed and moved away from this to foods that are processed and pre-made, and it is not to do with cost, it is to do with ease. If you can get the prisoners back into the kitchens and cooking again and give them the skills that they need, then we are actually having a double win here in that when they do get out hopefully they can go into an industry from there.

Part of the bill, as I said – and the minister was raising it specifically – is in relation to the outdoors and ensuring that the government of the day is protected. That is why we are not opposing the bill, because we do understand the current restrictions due to staffing and the current restrictions due to lockdowns and how difficult it is to always give someone the access to outside availability or to get them the hour of air that they are due, due to those operational circumstances that can happen. Some are caused by prisoners themselves who decide that they want to misbehave, and you can lock down a prison. Others are because of rolling action or strike action that could potentially be coming up soon, or there are just not enough staff in there. I think it is important that the management of the prison can make a decision in the best interests of staff, not in the best interests of prisoners, to protect the staff who are within that prison.

The other section of the amendments put forward by the department are quite simply in relation to a change from the validation from the Corrections Amendment Bill – which, again, we are not opposing – that have come through there. I thank the minister for bringing those amendments to us. I will not be really having much to say on them. It is simply a change to ensure that a practice that has

already been put in place is in legislation and made retrospective. It does protect the fact that those that are currently under orders will remain under orders in there.

As I said today, in the interests of time as well because we have got a couple of bills to get through – and apologies, I know a few people want to speak on this – I will not be doing a full contribution. But I will be saying quite firmly on it that, as I said, we are not opposing, but I will be raising some of those issues, particularly around staffing. I think the government need to go back to the drawing board when they are seeing prisons become full. We know what happens when prisons get full. We end up with more people going into the remand system. They end up with the Minister for Police – he is here today. They end up in police cells, which puts pressure on the Minister for Police as well, who has to then justify why police cannot get out on the beat because they have got to stay in the class A cells. These are all challenges that from this side of the chamber on these sorts of bills we look at logically. We understand the impact that they can have on community safety. That is why we say to the government: it is really important that you get your corrections system back in order. We have had a few ministers come through when it comes to corrections here in Victoria, and all we have seen each and every time is a lot of money spent on projects and a lot of money spent on capital investment within the prison system, and a lot of that money has ended up being wasted. We have got beds still closed due to black mould through prisons here in Victoria and arguments between the government and builders on who is responsible. At the end of the day, the government have to put their hand up and say they are responsible for the prison system here in Victoria. What we have seen so far is they have got no plans and no way to fix it. The best way to fix it would be to start off by reopening Port Phillip Prison so they have got the proper facilities and the proper access and they do not end up with an overloaded system or, worse, people stuck within police cells in Victoria, putting pressure on Victoria Police.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (10:29): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Corrections Amendment Bill 2026, noting community safety is of course a top priority for our Carroll Labor government. To keep Victorians safe, we have introduced the nation's toughest bail laws and introduced the 'adult crime, adult time' laws. Those who commit serious violence should face the full consequences. We know as a result of these laws that we have seen a drop in the latest crime statistics. This bill is continuing our efforts to keep Victorians safe. There are two specific problems that this bill is seeking to surmount: one, legal and operational issues arising from the current right to the open-air framework; and legal uncertainty caused by an administrative error affecting certain delegations – advanced practitioners in community corrections. I am going to speak to the house amendment first. I will note the member for Berwick might wish to take care in taking the place of a medical professional. Obviously good nutrition and exercise are good for anyone, but attempting to replace or in any way provide the advice that a medical professional might otherwise provide – I do not know, I would be cautious about that.

Coming back to the bill, community safety is a paramount priority for this government, and the community corrections system is an important part of that. Community corrections is about holding offenders to account for their criminal behaviour and keeping Victorians safe from crime. That includes requiring people on orders to do community work and to attend things like drug treatment or programs to address their behaviour. It includes holding people to account when they do not comply with court orders.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety recently identified an unacceptable error concerning the management of some offenders on community corrections orders between April 2024 and May 2026. The department did not update some paperwork following a change in job title of some of our hardworking community corrections officers. That reorganisation created a new role of advanced practitioner. The paperwork error means that actions taken by people working in the advanced practitioner role may not be valid on a technicality. Those frontline workers did nothing wrong; they did their job holding people to account. This is an administrative issue. Out of an abundance of caution, we are introducing this house amendment to retrospectively validate those

actions beyond doubt. The offenders on community orders did what they did, and many of them pled guilty as a result. There is no concern that people have been prosecuted for actions that did not happen or received a different punishment as a result of this paperwork error. The house amendment will ensure that people who fail to comply with their orders face the full consequences of their actions, as they should. These are targeted reforms in response to legal, financial, operational and community safety risks. The house amendment ensures an administrative oversight does not create avoidable risk to community safety or undermine the corrections system. The government calls on all members to support the bill. I hope that that acquits the house amendment.

I shall now proceed to the other specific problem that is being addressed with this bill, and that is legal and operational issues arising from the current right-to-open-air framework. When we are thinking about this particular situation of the corrections system, the government of course must ensure prisons can operate safely for staff, visitors and people in custody, and that is no doubt a delicate balance. The bill recognises the importance of access to open air of course while acknowledging that this must be managed alongside operational realities. Those realities include the need to maintain good order and safety across the prison system, including managing the risks from and between certain prisoners, including high-risk prisoners. They also include that facilities are designed to mitigate a range of risks, including the risk of incidents, risk of contraband and, at the most extreme end, attempted escapes. Prisons manage those risks on a day-to-day basis in dynamic circumstances. Corrections officers deserve our thanks for doing that work day in, day out.

I know when I was Parliamentary Secretary for Justice I actually had the privilege of visiting a number of corrections facilities and meeting with corrections staff and really getting a very good understanding, as best as I can as an outsider who is not having to fulfil that very challenging role, of the delicate way in which they have to manage the often-changing dynamics of a prison, because of course we are talking about human beings. What also impressed me greatly with the corrections officers was the great respect and honour which they paid to their role, to making sure that they could keep that delicate balance at all times to the best of their abilities and to really taking into account also the sentiments of those who have been incarcerated and are understandably in a very difficult situation. I was really impressed by the level of care and concern. But also of course they have to manage their own safety, and that is why these kinds of provisions are making sure safety is managed in a very considered way.

The reform is aimed at ensuring access to open air can be managed in a safe way alongside other legislative and operational obligations critical to prison functioning. The changes seek to reinforce and align with longstanding practice in the corrections system. The use of individual run-out yards is longstanding practice in the Victorian system and common practice in corrections systems around the world. These reforms provide an immediate and practical legislative response to a decision in a recent court case, noting the state is appealing the decision. So we will just have that on the record as well.

We know that communal exercise yards are not necessarily a workable universal alternative for many high-risk prisoners. Infrastructure changes are not always feasible or realistic without creating operational and safety issues or other unacceptable risks. I think the point that I am trying to get to is that you might solve one thing but create a rather undesirable domino effect that could risk the safety between prisoners and could risk the safety of those who work in the prisons or otherwise those who are visiting the prisons. There may be one-off unexpected non-routine or ongoing circumstances where open-air access is not reasonably practical. Again, I can recall when I did visit one of the corrections facilities that we were walking around the yard but had to be moved from that yard because it was anticipated an incident might occur. In those ever-changing and delicate dynamics this comes down to that particular skill of our corrections officers, who are having to intuit, knowing they have those day-to-day relationships with prisoners, and be able to adapt accordingly to exercise appropriate protocols, again, in the interests of their safety, the safety of the prisoners and, more broadly, community safety.

I think more broadly, if we think about the risk if we were not to pass these changes today, we would have continued legal uncertainty, financial exposure for the state, disruption to corrections operations and community safety risks. So I would contend and I think collectively my colleagues would contend that there are compelling reasons to pass these very nuanced reforms today in the interests of community safety, further important work in community safety, with an abundance of caution and prudence, to make sure that our prison systems can continue to function appropriately and also so that the community can have faith in that continued appropriate functioning of our prison systems. I really want to pay respect to those who work in our prison systems. I know that it is a challenging role, but it is certainly an honourable role and one that is very important. It certainly takes a lot of skill and a lot of discipline to be able to manage those difficult situations on our behalf.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (10:39): I rise to make a contribution on the Corrections Amendment Bill 2026. I am aware we have a relatively busy program ahead of us today with a few things on the agenda, so I will make a few relatively brief comments. I understand that this bill addresses prisoner rights in corrections, and the background to it, which was touched on in the wideranging contribution by our lead speaker, is around the fact that we have had a case where a plaintiff, a fellow called George Marrogi, argued that he had been denied his statutory right under the Corrections Act 1986, which provides that prisoners who are not engaged in outdoor work are entitled to at least 1 hour each day in the open air, weather permitting, which I think is the term that is used. Apparently, having read a little bit about that, we had scenarios arising that during staff shortages, lockdowns and operational issues – I think even COVID might have been one of the factors in that – some prisoners, this gentleman being one, did not receive their full hour of exercise on a number of occasions, and despite being a convicted murderer and drug trafficker, apparently his right to legally pursue this exists. The Supreme Court found that it was a statutory entitlement to have 1 hour in the open air; the department could not simply rely on operational difficulties or staff shortages as an excuse, which I find an interesting finding; and where the entitlement had been breached, prisoners could seek compensation in the form of damages from the state.

I also read that Justice Harris personally inspected the prison yards and held that whether an area is open air depends on such factors as whether the prisoners can feel the sun, wind and rain, whether there is a genuine sense of being outdoors and whether the space is large enough to move around and exercise in, and also whether it is so enclosed by walls, roofs or mesh that it no longer feels like the open air. I am personally struggling a little bit to have a great deal of sympathy for the poor convicted murderer and drug trafficker that he cannot feel the sun, wind and rain in his hair and on his skin and enjoy that sense of being outdoors. We come into this place and we debate a lot of bills, and there is a lot of back and forth across the chamber, but I think most members in this place are scratching their heads when we find ourselves in a situation where a convicted murderer and drug importer is able to sue for compensation for not getting that feeling of being outside. One might suggest the world has gone slightly mad when that can happen. I do appreciate and respect that this bill is in the chamber to rectify that, and I certainly acknowledge that.

Of course we have had some of our fantastic civil libertarians in this state arguing that he has his rights and they need to be protected. But I do not really align to that theory personally, given that individual's background. A convicted murderer suing the state because he missed some time outside during COVID and staff shortages is just simply not right, so I am pleased that this is now being rectified. I think as our lead speaker touched on, one does question whether that arose over staffing issues within the system, and I think that is certainly something that we have acknowledged has occurred in the past and a matter that needs to be rectified. But the bottom line is that we should not be paying money for this. This bill amends that open air right, if we can call it that, and certainly, as our lead speaker indicated, we are not opposing it. It also retrospectively removes the liability for compensation, and we also support that element of the bill. This person should not be getting compensation for this, and I would hope that no person would receive compensation for anything like this in the future.

I just want to point out the issue that has been touched on around our prison system and those within it being afforded, perhaps, luxuries, if I can call them that, that people in the outside world struggle to obtain, achieve or receive. We had that example of taxpayer-funded Ozempic being provided in prisons. That is just not on. People outside of prison are paying a lot of money to have that medication for good reason, and we should not be providing that free when we have families that are struggling to put food on the table that have been prescribed that for health reasons having to pay. It is just another element where the priorities are wrong and we have got things slightly wrong, and we would like to see some rectification of that. I am sure that if we get a change of government in a few months time, this is one of the areas that we will be looking at, bringing some reality back into the rights of those that are incarcerated. Yes, they do have rights, but gee, there has got to be a line somewhere there where common sense prevails in relation to these matters.

I said I would not talk for too long on this. I know there are a number of speakers and time is limited as we have the apology coming up. But we do not oppose this bill. This is one bill that I am sure we all wish to pass through and deny this convicted murderer and drug trafficker the right to obtain compensation from the state for what really is a rather frivolous matter.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (10:46): I rise to support the Corrections Amendment Bill 2026. This is a bill that will provide for two things, essentially. One is to amend the right around people and those in custody to be in open air under the Corrections Act 1986 in response to those legal issues that have gone through the Supreme Court, as we have heard. Two, through the amendment that has been moved by the minister as well, is to strengthen and rectify those legal safeguards around community corrections orders and the new role of advanced practitioners in response to what was an administrative oversight.

I would like to begin by acknowledging all of the justice ministers – the Minister for Corrections, the Minister for Police and others – for bringing this bill to the chamber. But I also particularly acknowledge the work of everyone across Corrections Victoria who works to keep us safe every single day through our justice, custodial and prison system as well. Corrections Victoria has a vision for safer prisons, safer people and safer communities. Our mission is to create a safer, smarter system with a skilled and supportive workforce that enables people in their care to make better decisions. Corrections Victoria is home to and responsible for over 3000 staff and operates Victoria's adult prison and post-sentence system as well. It runs, I believe, around 15 correctional facilities across Victoria as of June 2025. Victoria's prison system had 6500 adults in custody – 95 per cent of them male, 5 per cent female – 40 per cent of whom are on remand and 60 per cent are on sentence.

As a result of our stronger bail laws and tougher laws around serious and violent crime we are continuing to see more people on remand, sentenced or in custody. Bail refusals are at record highs, with a 70 per cent increase – that is 10,000 more alleged offenders remanded. We have experienced an 84 per cent increase in bail revocations, and Children's Court bail refusals are up by more than a third. As a result of these changes we have also been investing to strengthen our justice system and corrections system to accommodate this increase in people in custody – $727 million in the 2025–26 state budget to ramp up our custodial capacity, recruiting 700 new or additional corrections staff as well, and for the new Western Plains correctional facility. The recent budget in 2026–27 invested overall $2.6 billion, including $229 million for further capacity increases and $43 million for programs to reduce reoffending and support rehabilitation within those settings. But of course along with these investments there is more we must continue to do in terms of legislation and reform to keep our corrections staff safe, to ensure people on remand or in custody are held in accordance with the laws and expectations of the state and in safe and fair conditions and to ensure overall that our community is safe as well.

In respect to updating legislation around open air, the current legal issue arose after the Supreme Court found that the rear and open-air courtyards attached to some high security and management unit cells did not meet the legal meaning of being in open air. That decision created legal uncertainty and exposed the gap between the wording of the law and the way staff have safely operated high-security

units. Fresh air, of course, matters. Exercise matters. Contact with daylight and the outside environment in supporting physical and mental wellbeing matters. Corrections workers must also protect staff, prisoners and the broader public as well. They cannot ignore escape risks, threats, gang conflict, self-harm, contraband or violence without the appropriate legal settings themselves. The law must recognise all of those realities at the same time and protect all within those custodial sentences.

This bill will amend the right for people in prisons to be in open air. Under the Corrections Act 1986, section 47(1)(a) provides that every person in prison who is not ordinarily engaged in outdoor work has the right to spend at least one hour each day in the open air, weather permitting. The bill provides that in addition to any weather considerations the right to be in open air may be limited where it is not reasonably practicable to provide the entitlement having regard to operational considerations. The amendments in the bill respond to the Supreme Court's judgement. At the time of consideration of this bill in Parliament, that decision, I note, as the member for Albert Park did, is subject to an appeal being brought on behalf of the state.

This bill addresses the legal, financial and operational risks arising from that Supreme Court case and ensures that Corrections Victoria can continue to manage access to open air safely alongside operational considerations critical to the safe, secure and effective functioning of prisons. As I said, the bill amends section 47 of the Corrections Act to provide that in addition to weather considerations the right to be in open air may be limited where it is not reasonably practicable to provide that full entitlement having regard to operational considerations. In broad terms they include the management, good order or security of the prison; the right to safe custody or welfare of the prisoner; and the right to safe custody or welfare of any other prisoner in the prison too.

The bill takes two clear actions, as I said, with respect to those changes. It also allows decision-makers in the prison to consider management, good order and security of the prison and the right to safe custody and welfare of the prisoner too. These factors really do matter, because moving one high-risk prisoner through a communal area may require several officers, expose another prisoner to attack, interrupt access for an entire unit, or create an escape or contraband risk. One rigid rule can produce an unsafe and unfair result for everyone.

I recently had the pleasure to visit, in the lead-up to this bill coming before the Parliament, the Metropolitan Remand Centre to see the very complexity of this case firsthand. I want to thank Vicki Ryan, the general manager, Fiona Murphy, the assistant commissioner, and Rebecca Allen, operations manager, for their really detailed and thorough tour of a lot of the MRC precinct. They explained the pressures staff manage and showed me how the centre combines security, health care and rehabilitation. I want to place on record my deep thanks again to corrections workers across Victoria: prison officers, community corrections staff, clinicians, educators, case managers, program staff, health workers, administrative staff, intelligence teams and everyone who keeps our prisons secure and communities safe. Most Victorians will never, ever see the work they do or the inside of a prison, but the work they do behind those walls and secure doors does matter and is very, very important. They manage sometimes very difficult and dangerous circumstances. They support victims by enforcing court orders that protect the public and so much more as well.

I actually had the opportunity to visit the very cell block, the high-security cell block, which these reforms go to the heart of. Basically, walking in you have a very confined arrangement there with a bed and a TV that is behind a closed, safe plastic or glass-type cabinet. They have obviously amenities there. But then stepping out they do have a secure courtyard which does have a mesh roof over the top of it, which does technically provide for that daylight, that wind and that open-air environment for that person in custody to experience at certain times of the day. But obviously the court has ruled that more needs to be done to provide further access out in the backyard, which also adjoins a confined back courtyard.

As part of the tour, I had the pleasure of visiting other parts of the MRC precinct as well. I just want to say the amazing work that happens behind those doors, again, will not be seen by many Victorians.

But the woodworking facilities that are there – the technical facilities that are provided to many of the prisoners to not only help their rehabilitation process but actually help them learn new skills or refine or maintain their pre-existing skills before having gone in – mean they can come out at the other end of their sentence with something to contribute and offer and get their life back on track once they are released as well. It is also around the social interventions within the prison as well: parenting programs to help parents reconnect with their children, and post sentencing as well. There is a lot of work going on behind the scenes that I just want to acknowledge and commend as well.

But as the member for Pascoe Vale, I of course also represent a community that carries a lot of Victoria's corrections history, having been home to the former Pentridge Prison. It is now a very entertaining hospitality venue, but once upon a time, obviously from 1850, when it first opened as a stockade, right up until its closure in 1997, it was basically the final arm of Victoria's criminal justice system. Pentridge also housed the panopticon blocks, which are very relevant to this bill, and they isolated people in custody for 23 hours a day in dark, cramped and damp cells. The 1870 royal commission heard that these conditions caused profound mental illness. Victoria eventually dismantled them, but there are still the foundations of at least one of them at Pentridge that you can go and visit as part of a tour. You can have a coffee and go up to Palace Cinema and watch a movie as well, if you like, as part of that National Trust tour.

But Pentridge of course was also home, infamously, to H Division and Jika Jika, some of the most notorious prison and custodial centres in this country's history, through which we have obviously gathered a lot of learnings around custodial sentences to apply to a modern, contemporary setting, where prisoners are held in accordance with the expectation of the community but also there are humane facilities and safe arrangements for staff as well. I commend this bill to the chamber.

Chris CREWTHER (Mornington) (10:56): I rise to speak today on the Corrections Amendment Bill 2026. As mentioned by the member for Berwick, this is a short and targeted bill, but its legal consequences are significant. It changes the operation of the statutory entitlement of prisoners to spend at least 1 hour each day in the open air, excludes the new operational provisions from the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and retrospectively limits the state's financial liability. The bill responds to the Supreme Court's decision in *Marrogi v Secretary, Department of Justice and Community Safety*, which found that certain enclosed rear courtyards at the Metropolitan Remand Centre and Barwon Prison did not constitute access to the open air for the purposes of the Corrections Act 1986.

No reasonable person doubts that prisons are complex and difficult environments. Corrections officers must manage dangerous offenders, competing security risks, separation requirements, medical and welfare concerns, staffing pressures and indeed the safety of every person within a prison. Those officers must have the practical authority required to maintain order and protect lives. The bill provides that the daily open-air entitlement need not be provided where it is not reasonably practicable, having regard to operational considerations. Those considerations include the management, good order and security of the prison and the rights, safe custody or welfare of other prisoners and so forth. There will plainly be circumstances in which temporary restrictions are necessary. A serious incident, an immediate threat, the need to separate prisoners or an operational situation affecting the safe movement of prisoners may make normal access impracticable. The law must be workable in the real conditions faced by corrections staff.

However, the operational considerations in this bill are expressly non-exhaustive. The legislation leaves scope for other considerations to be relied upon and contemplates that restrictions may continue for extended or ongoing periods. This is where Parliament must exercise care. A broad discretion may be necessary, but broad discretion should be accompanied by clear accountability. The government should explain why it has chosen a non-exhaustive and largely undefined test and what protections will prevent a temporary operational response from becoming a prolonged administrative convenience. When access is restricted for more than a brief period, there should be proper safeguards. That could include written reasons, mandatory review after a defined period, regular health and

welfare assessments, reporting to an independent corrections oversight body and additional protections where a restriction continues for several days or longer. These safeguards would not prevent corrections officers from acting quickly in an emergency. They would ensure that extended restrictions are justified, reviewed and recorded. Operational flexibility and accountability are not competing objectives; a sound corrections system requires both.

The charter provisions also require close scrutiny. The entire corrections system is not being placed outside the charter. The exclusion applies specifically to the new operational considerations qualification and the related new section of the Corrections Act. Even so, the exclusion is significant because the bill removes the ordinary five-year expiry mechanism that applies to a charter override. Unless a future Parliament intervenes, the exclusion will operate indefinitely. The government has acknowledged the new provisions may be incompatible with charter rights. It has not adequately explained why an indefinite exclusion is necessary. Even where Parliament accepts that safety may justify restricting a statutory entitlement, it does not follow that the charter must be displaced permanently. A sunset clause, a statutory review or a more narrowly framed exclusion would provide a more proportionate response. At the very least, Parliament should be given a future opportunity to examine how the provisions have operated in practice, whether they have been used only when necessary and whether the indefinite exclusion remains justified.

Also, I note that this links to a whole range of things that we have been considering in this Parliament over this term in relation to crime, corrections, the criminal justice system and more. We have a situation in Victoria where crime is at a level that still is way, way too high. Even though recent changes have been made to bail and much more, more needs to be done. This is seen plainly in Mornington, where there are quite a number of issues – issues in terms of crime in Mornington in particular and issues at places like Mornington station, which has had its hours reduced. We in the opposition have committed, if we are elected into government, to increase the hours at Mornington police station as well as a number of police stations right across Victoria. We also have a situation where police are doing a terrific job, but they are struggling under the pressure of insufficient resources in Victoria and insufficient staffing levels. That is why we in the opposition have committed, if we go into government, to recruit 3000 additional police officers. That is needed. It will be needed when the member for Berwick is police minister in a new government, because he is a person who is experienced in this area. He has worked in the police, he understands what is needed, and we need this in Victoria.

We also need to go beyond this act to do things across the criminal justice spectrum, such as 'break bail, face jail', adult time for adult crime and so much more. As I mentioned as well, with crime being a major issue continually, the community deserves a fully functioning criminal justice system. We need a 24/7 police station and front counter hours, because Victorians deserve confidence that when they need police, police will be there. Every Victorian deserves to feel safe in their own home. Every shop owner deserves confidence that crime will be taken seriously. Every police officer deserves the resources they need to protect the community. Each corrections officer in our prison system needs a safe working environment as well.

It is time for this tired government, whether it is under Andrews or Allan or now Carroll – we have had three Premiers now in one term – to get out of the way. This is a Labor government that is tired. It needs to get out of the way, and we need a Liberals–Nationals team, a Liberals–Nationals government, to implement our plan and to put community safety first. We need to put community safety first, because on the Mornington Peninsula alone we have had more than 12,000 criminal offences even just in the last 12-month period. Mornington continues to be one of the peninsula suburbs with the highest number of recorded offences. I saw this firsthand when I met in the last year with residents of Beleura Hill, where 66 people attended the first Beleura Hill Safe Neighbours meeting and around 200 expressed interest in joining. One resident had his car broken into and then stolen, before three youths allegedly entered his home and moved through it for 18 minutes while he

and his son slept inside. He was left questioning whether he should sell his home and leave the neighbourhood altogether.

No Victorian should be driven from the community they love because they no longer feel safe in their own home, nor should residents have to organise private patrols, install additional cameras and turn themselves into a neighbourhood security network simply to protect their families and properties. We have seen alleged drug activity, firearms and prohibited weapons uncovered in suburban Mornington, bringing the threat of organised and violent crime closer to ordinary families. One constituent also contacted me in June on behalf of their daughter, who had been dragged from her car, punched, thrown to the road and threatened by machete-wielding offenders in a terrifying carjacking whilst simply trying to get to work. This is something that should not happen in Victoria.

We need police who are protected. We need a community who are protected. We need corrections officers that are protected. We need a safe working environment for police. We need a safe working environment for corrections officers. But importantly, this is about a safe environment for our community in the Mornington electorate, on the Mornington Peninsula and right across Victoria. Whether you are a young person or an elderly person in your home or you are a family, you should not feel unsafe. Yes, this bill today is about open-air access in our prison system and makes a number of administrative changes, but we need to go much further than this bill. We need to make changes that do protect Victorians. We need to make changes that this government simply have not made sufficiently over the last four years, or indeed over the last nearly 12 years now, or indeed over the last 23 out of 27 years that they have been in government.

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (11:06): I rise to speak on the Corrections Amendment Bill 2026. This is a targeted bill that deals with two specific issues in Victoria's corrections system. It is not a broad rewrite of corrections law – rather, it is a practical response to legal and operational issues that have emerged and that require Parliament's attention. To keep Victorians safe, our Labor government has introduced the nation's toughest bail laws and introduced the 'adult crime, adult time' laws. We have seen a drop in the latest crime statistics, so we know that we are heading in the right direction. This bill continues those efforts to keep our community safe. It is about making sure Victoria's corrections laws are clear, workable and fit for purpose. The bill is technical but with a straightforward purpose. It will improve community safety and recognises the reality of the corrections system. The bill clarifies how the right to open air should operate within prisons and validates certain actions taken by advanced practitioners in community corrections where a delegation oversight has occurred. Importantly, the bill does not abolish access to open air. It clarifies that the right does not apply where it is not reasonably practicable, having regard to operational considerations. This is consistent with limitations in other jurisdictions.

When we discuss corrections legislation it can be easy to focus only on court cases, legal principles and technical amendments, but behind every correctional facility are real people doing difficult work every single day. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the prison officers and corrections staff who work across Victoria, including the dedicated staff at the Hopkins Correctional Centre and Langi Kal Kal Prison in the electorate of Ripon. These are men and women who turn up every single day to work in a challenging environment. They manage complex behaviours, they maintain order and security, and they protect their colleagues, visitors and those in custody. They play a critical role in rehabilitation while also making sure that our prisons remain safe places to work and operate. Much of their work goes unseen by the public, yet our justice system depends on them. They deal with situations that can change rapidly. They make difficult decisions. They manage risks that most of us will never encounter in our working lives. Their professionalism and commitment deserve recognition from this Parliament, and I am honoured to represent so many prison officers that live in Ararat, Beaufort and surrounding communities in the electorate of Ripon.

The bill before us recognises an important reality: corrections systems do not operate in theory; they operate in the real world. The current law provides prisoners with a right to be in the open air for at least 1 hour each day if weather conditions permit. This bill will not abolish that right. What it does,

though, is clarify that there may be circumstances where providing that access is not reasonably practicable because of operational considerations. That is a sensible change. Prisons must constantly balance a range of competing responsibilities. They must protect safety, they must maintain good order, manage security risks and separate prisoners when necessary and they must respond to incidents and emergencies. They prevent violence, the movement of contraband and, in extreme circumstances, escape attempts. The staff at facilities such as the Hopkins Correctional Centre and Langi Kal Kal Prison understand these realities better than anyone. If a serious incident occurs, if a prisoner needs to be separated for safety reasons or if there are significant security concerns, corrections officers need the ability to manage those situations appropriately. The law should recognise those operational realities, rather than pretending that they do not exist.

The bill responds to a recent Supreme Court decision involving Mr George Marrogi that raised questions about how the right to open air should operate in practice. The government is appealing that decision, but it is also taking action to provide clarity in the legislation. Importantly, the bill recognises that some prisoners present particularly complex management challenges. In certain circumstances, particularly involving high-risk prisoners, providing access to open air may not be reasonably practicable because of safety, security and operational considerations. The legislation provides a framework for recognising those circumstances while still preserving the underlying right in ordinary situations.

I know there will be some who raise concerns about this bill. Those concerns deserve to be heard and to be considered, but I believe that it is also important that we listen to the people working on the front line of our corrections system. Corrections officers understand the operational consequences of policies and legal decisions. They understand what can and cannot be achieved safely within the physical constraints of prison infrastructure. They understand the challenges of managing high-risk offenders. Their practical experience matters. This Parliament has an obligation to make sure that the laws we pass are workable, not just well intentioned. The bill also addresses the state's financial exposure arising from past claims relating to limitations on open air access before the commencement of these reforms. The purpose of this measure is to provide certainty and to reduce the risk of ongoing litigation and compensation claims that could create significant financial exposure for Victorian taxpayers.

The second aspect of the bill relates to a technical delegation issue involving advanced practitioners in community corrections. As outlined in the explanatory material, a departmental restructure created the role of advanced practitioner. An administrative oversight meant that delegation instruments were not updated appropriately, despite those officers continuing to perform their duties in good faith. These practitioners were undertaking important responsibilities, including issuing directions and commencing proceedings in relation to community correction orders. The bill validates actions taken during the affected period and provides certainty that those actions remain effective.

Again, I think it is important to remember the human element. This situation was not caused by frontline staff acting improperly. These officers were doing their jobs in good faith and serving our community. The amendment ensures that administrative oversight does not undermine the work they performed or create unintended risks for community safety. For communities across regional Victoria, community safety is not an abstract concept. People in communities across Ripon expect our government to maintain a corrections system that is effective, accountable and safe. They expect prisoners to be managed appropriately, they expect community correction orders to be enforced and they expect corrections staff to have the legal certainty needed to carry out their duties. This bill supports those objectives.

I particularly, again, want to acknowledge the staff at Hopkins Correctional Centre and Langi Kal Kal Prison. Their contribution to our community is huge. They perform difficult work with professionalism and resilience, and they help keep Victorians safe, often without public recognition. This bill recognises the realities that they face every day. It supports the safe, secure and effective operation of correctional facilities. It provides greater legal certainty and it addresses operational risks

and protects the integrity of both the prison and community corrections systems. For those reasons, I support the Corrections Amendment Bill 2026, and I commend the bill to the house.

Sitting suspended 11:14 am until 11:32 am.

Business interrupted under resolution of house of 18 June, as amended today.

Motions

Apology to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in Victorian government schools

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier, Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (11:32): I table the statement of apology to victims and survivors of historical child sexual abuse in Victorian government schools.

Ordered to be published.

Ben CARROLL: I move:

> That this house endorses the apology to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in Victorian government schools.

I stand here today to acknowledge a terrible reality: children and young people who should have been safe in Victorian government schools were sexually abused by people entrusted with their care. We gather in this place to acknowledge these crimes and the institutional failures that left children unprotected. We also acknowledge the broader reality: child sexual abuse has been committed in schools, institutions and homes across our community. Every victim-survivor had the right to be protected, and every victim-survivor has the right to be heard, believed and treated with care.

Within Victorian government schools these crimes occurred over decades. They occurred in places where children should have been protected, supported and able to learn and thrive. They occurred in places that parents and carers trusted. Today we apologise for these crimes, for the failures that allowed them to occur and for the profound and lasting harm carried by victim-survivors, their families and loved ones.

For decades individual victim-survivors and their loved ones sought justice, recognition and accountability. Some told trusted adults what had been done to them. Some made formal complaints or pursued civil claims. Some searched for other victim-survivors, gathered evidence and fought to hold perpetrators accountable through the justice system. Much of that work has been carried out privately and without the recognition or response it deserved.

Today we acknowledge all of those victims-survivors, families and supporters. We also acknowledge the courage of victim-survivors who have not come forward, who have never spoken publicly about what was done to them. No person should feel pressured to tell their story until they are ready to or, if not, at all. But to any victim-survivor who does choose to come forward: you choose and you deserve to be heard, to be treated with respect and to be cared for and taken seriously.

In 2021 Rod Owen spoke publicly about the sexual abuse committed against him when he was a child at Beaumaris Primary School, knowing that disclosure would come at a personal cost. His decision brought sustained public attention to the crimes committed at Beaumaris Primary. It also helped to drive broader scrutiny of the practices and systematic failures across Victorian government schools that victim-survivors, families and communities had been trying to have recognised for decades. That burden did not belong to Rod. It did not belong with any victim-survivor. The responsibility to listen and act belonged to the institutions that failed them. Rod's decision was a powerful public intervention. It added to the work of those who had already spoken, and it gave others confidence that they were not alone. More victims added their voices in their own time and in their own way.

Today we also acknowledge Grant Holland, Glen Fearnett, Tim Courtney, Rick Turner and the many other victim-survivors whose courage, persistence and solidarity have helped drive the call for the

board of inquiry into historical child sexual abuse in Beaumaris Primary School and other Victorian government schools. We acknowledge the loved ones and supporters who stood beside victim-survivors and those who stood up for people who were no longer alive, including Karen Walker, whose advocacy for her brother Ian helped to ensure that his life and what was done to him would not be forgotten. We acknowledge Vicki Curie and Von, whose lived experience and advocacy has meant that victim-survivors remain central to implementing the recommendations that came from the board of inquiry and the work leading to today's apology.

We also today acknowledge the member for Sandringham, and I thank him for being here. He was instrumental in support for the inquiry and the support for victim-survivors. I know his family will be very proud looking down as well. We also acknowledge journalists, in particular Russell Jackson. I also acknowledge former member of Parliament Stuart Grimley and advocates and organisations including the National Survivors Foundation, LOUD Fence Inc and the Survivors & Mates Support Network, who helped carry forward the work of recognition, accountability and reform.

The burden of making these crimes heard should never have rested with victim-survivors, nor should any victim-survivor have been left to wonder whether they could have prevented the harm that adults committed and institutions failed to stop. That guilt was not theirs to carry. The shame of these crimes belongs to the perpetrators. The responsibility for failing to stop them belongs with the adults and institutions that failed to act. But because victim-survivors, families, loved ones and advocates persisted, in 2023 our Victorian government established the board of inquiry. The board of inquiry created an official public record of historical child sexual abuse connected with Beaumaris Primary School and certain other government schools from 1960 to 1999. It examined what the Department of Education knew, what it did and what it failed to do. It found serious and systemic failures over decades, including a culture that protected institutional reputation above children's safety. Since then the recent Forum for Truth and Recognition and the systematic review have deepened the public record, our understanding of what was done and the consequences that are still carried today. The public record describes adults who did not listen, systems that did not act, warnings that were missed and children and young people who should have been protected but were not. Instead too often adults at institutions were believed and protected while children and young people were not.

When I met with victim-survivors recently, one person described what childhood safety requires in simple and powerful terms: they said it requires big people listening to little people. Children may tell adults things that are difficult to hear and even harder to comprehend. The harm children have been subject to may be so profound and what they describe so confronting that adults struggle to recognise, understand or accept what they are hearing, even when they want to. But that is when a child most needs an adult to listen, to take them seriously and to act to protect them. Too often this did not happen, and the consequences of that failure did not end in childhood, as Betty, a victim-survivor who participated in the Forum for Truth and Recognition, described in these terms:

> … if this is done to a child, in their formative years, there is something that gets etched into their core …
>
> …
>
> It never fades. It is always a trauma. It is a current event every single moment of life.

Her words remind us that the impacts of these crimes did not end when the abuse ended. Another victim-survivor spoke to me about what it can mean to live with those impacts, having to hold both the horror and the hope – to live with the reality and continuing effects of what was done while still trying to make space for hope. We acknowledge the strength it takes to live with both.

The board of inquiry recognised that acknowledgement, apology, memorialisation and accountability do matter to victim-survivors and their families, and that is why today matters. An apology is not enough on its own, but it is necessary.

I now move that this Parliament expresses this apology to victims and survivors, to their families, their loved ones and their communities in the following terms:

Today, we offer our formal and sincere apology to every person who was sexually abused as a student of a Victorian government school.

We failed to protect you. We failed to listen when you tried to disclose or explain what was done to you. We failed to act with the urgency, responsibility and care that you deserved.

For those historical failures, and for the harm done to you as a result, we are deeply sorry.

The shame of these crimes is not yours. It never was. The shame belongs to the perpetrators who abused you. It belongs with the institutions that failed to protect you. And it belongs with the systems that looked away when children and young people needed adults to act.

We acknowledge the harm these crimes have caused, and the impacts you continue to carry.

We acknowledge what was taken from you: the right to be safe at school, the freedom to learn in a supportive environment, the confidence to trust the adults around you, and the enjoyment of experiences and milestones that should have been ordinary parts of childhood – but were instead marked by fear.

The impacts of these crimes did not end when the abuse ended. They have affected health, relationships, education, work, trust, identity, intimacy, wellbeing and decision-making – and altered lives in ways that cannot be undone.

We also acknowledge that the harm caused by child sexual abuse ripples across families, relationships and generations, and is also carried by loved ones and supporters.

Every person who has experienced child sexual abuse has the right to be heard, believed and treated with care and respect. They have the right to receive a response that places their safety, dignity and wellbeing first.

We acknowledge the additional harm caused when those who sought help were ignored, disbelieved, silenced, blamed or threatened. Those failures deepened the harm and continue to represent a profound betrayal of trust.

We want you to know that, even though you were not heard then, you are heard now. And we believe you.

We honour the courage of victims and their loved ones who fought to be heard, sought answers, brought these crimes into the open and demanded accountability. Victim-survivors and their loved ones have been forced to drive changes that institutions should have led themselves. That responsibility belonged with government, the Department of Education, schools, and the adults who failed to act. Today, we commit to carrying that responsibility forward through action.

We will continue to pursue accountability for perpetrators and institutional failures. We will continue to support victim-survivors and their families in ways that recognise the enduring impacts of these crimes, including through better access to information and records, services for adult victim-survivors, and restorative engagement approaches. We will create an environment in which child sexual abuse can be acknowledged and spoken about openly, so that concerns can be raised, heard and acted upon.

Lasting change requires individuals and institutions to confront difficult realities and ensure that silence is not allowed to protect perpetrators or reputations. And we will continue to strengthen the systems, safeguards and culture needed to protect every child and young person attending a Victorian government school.

To every victim-survivor:

We are sorry.

We are sorry that you were sexually assaulted or raped when you were a student in a government school.

We are sorry for the harm done to you – and the impacts you and your loved ones continue to carry.

We are sorry for the failures that allowed this to occur.

No apology can fully capture what was taken from you, your families and loved ones.

No words can undo what was done.

No statement from a Parliament can restore the childhoods, teenage years, opportunities, relationships, and lives that these crimes stole.

But that is not a reason for silence.

For too long, silence protected perpetrators and institutions instead of children.

So today, we name these crimes publicly and plainly.

To every victim-survivor and to those victims who are no longer with us:

You had the right to be safe at school.

> Your childhood should have been shaped by safety, care, learning and trust.
>
> Instead, for too many, it was shaped by abuse, fear and betrayal.
>
> We acknowledge the profound impact these crimes have had on you, your families, your loved ones and those who have supported you.
>
> We accept responsibility for the failures that allowed these crimes to occur.
>
> And we are deeply sorry.

Today this Parliament apologises and accepts responsibility, but our responsibility does not end with an apology. As victim-survivors have made clear, an apology cannot stand alone. It must be followed by action. We owe it to those here today, those watching or listening elsewhere, those who have never disclosed and those who are no longer with us. We owe it to every child and young person attending a Victorian government school now and into the future.

Schools do operate with a much stronger child safety framework now. These safeguards matter, but they are not enough. Perpetrators will continue to cultivate trust, test boundaries and manipulate children and adults to gain access and avoid detection. That is why child safety will always be a priority, and our work will continue to help staff, parents and carers recognise warning signs, understand grooming behaviours and raise concerns. School leaders must build cultures where children and young people are heard, concerns are acted on, information is shared, risk is confronted and safety is placed above reputation, discomfort or any sort of defensiveness.

The Department of Education now has a sexual harm response unit and dedicated child safety investigation teams. Strong independent regulation is also essential. We are strengthening the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority's oversight of schools and their compliance with child safety requirements and the new Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority, which oversees early childhood education services, while the Social Service Regulator now administers the reportable conduct scheme and working with children checks.

We will also continue to support victim-survivors of abuse in our government schools through the practical measures implemented in response to the board of inquiry's recommendations, including a restorative engagement program for victim-survivors to receive a personal acknowledgement or apology from a senior leader in the Department of Education; a dedicated website and phone line for victim-survivors; policy and guidance for schools responding to historical child sexual abuse; and improved access to school records, including information about the history of government schools that have closed or merged, what records may be available and how to request them.

Victim-survivor voices must remain at the centre of this work. One participant in the Forum for Truth and Recognition described what meaningful engagement requires. They said:

> I seek compassionate listening, a willingness to see my truth and a curiosity that may enable learnings that inform improvements in the Victorian public education system, to protect children and adolescents into the future.

I thank the victim-survivors, their families and the advocates and organisations contributing to the implementation of the board of inquiry's recommendation and to the forum's public record. I also acknowledge those who have spoken up in other ways, those who have chosen not to share their experiences and those no longer with us. Every victim-survivor experience matters.

Today is not about the end of our obligations; it is a commitment to apply what we have learned, strengthen child safeguarding, support victim-survivors and keep confronting the hardest parts of our institutional history. We commit to giving meaning to this apology through what we do next.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (11:56): I rise to support the motion. I want to begin by acknowledging the victim-survivors who are here with us today and those watching this apology online. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your patience, which has been tested. And thank you for your courage, which has paved the way for today's historic and long-overdue apology.

On behalf of the Liberals and Nationals coalition, I want to say plainly, we are sorry. I say this without reservation or qualification.

Outside the home, a school should be the safest place for a child to be. When we send our children to school, we are trusting that they will have the opportunity to learn the things that they need to know in order to live a good life. But there is a more fundamental trust we place in our schools too, beyond the lessons in the classroom. It is a trust that our children will be safe – that they will be cared for and protected. But for at least 482 Victorian children that trust was betrayed. It was betrayed in the most profound and life altering of ways. It was betrayed because children experienced child sexual abuse while attending Victorian government schools.

There are few crimes that our law and our conscience judge more harshly than child sexual abuse, and rightly so. It is a crime that exploits the inherent trust of a child rather than merely breaking it. It is a crime committed against a child – by definition, someone too young to understand what is happening to them and too powerless to stop it. And it is a crime whose harm does not end with the act itself. It follows survivors through their lives, shaping their relationships, their sense of safety and their sense of self. That is why this Parliament owes survivors more than sympathy. It owes them the truth told fully and a system that will never again allow a child's safety to be compromised.

Before I touch on the work of the Beaumaris board of inquiry, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the work of my dear friend the member for Sandringham. Building upon the work of Stuart Grimley, a member in the other place between 2018 and 2022, the member for Sandringham took up the mantle in campaigning for a dedicated inquiry into historical sexual abuse at Victorian government schools. The Beaumaris board of inquiry takes its name from Beaumaris Primary School, where a significant number of instances of historical sexual abuse took place. I note that the school is in the electorate of Sandringham, and I pay tribute to the member for Sandringham for adding his voice to those of the many dedicated individuals who have been advocating for many years for an inquiry into child sexual abuse not just at Beaumaris Primary School but, importantly, at many other government schools too. Beaumaris was not the only government school at which child sexual abuse occurred, but Beaumaris has provided the lightning rod moment for acknowledging, listening to and now apologising to all survivors – taking the first step so that the truth could be told and this stain on our state be brought into the light for reckoning. These advocates and these survivors and their families were forced to wait too long, and that is a failing that I will return to shortly. First, though, I will address the findings of the board of inquiry. The inquiry handed down its report in February 2024. It is sobering, distressing reading. The board of inquiry found that the Department of Education:

> … woefully failed to protect children from the risk of child sexual abuse at Beaumaris Primary School and certain other government schools between 1960 and 1994.

The inquiry found that these failings were serious and systemic and put many children at the risk of child sexual abuse. Over 400 government schools have now been named in civil claims or redress applications. That is close to one in three secondary schools operating between 1950 and 1999. This was not an isolated failure. It was systemic, it was widespread and for decades it was quite literally swept under the rug. The inquiry identified six systemic failures that contributed to the department's wholly inadequate response. I want to visit each one of these failings because as policymakers and legislators it is essential that we in this place learn these lessons and understand the consequences of these failures.

The first was an absence of policies and procedures. Between 1960 and 1994 the department had no policies or procedures for responding to allegations of child sexual abuse, despite knowing of the risk and having a legislative and regulatory framework that gave it power to discipline staff.

The second was an absence of guidance to school staff. There was no guidance instructing staff how to identify, report, manage, respond to or prevent child sexual abuse.

The third was a culture that prioritised the reputation of the education system over the safety of children. The department routinely moved teachers between schools or into non-teaching roles to manage allegations rather than removing the risk. One convicted offender was moved into an administrative role and banned from teaching for only three years. This finding is a particularly salient one for us as legislators. We must never again allow a situation where a creation of government comes to believe that its purpose is to protect itself rather than those it serves. The Department of Education is a creation of government to provide education to Victorian children in a safe place. It was not created to protect its own reputation or that of the people it hires. We in this place must carry this lesson with us every day in every piece of legislation brought before us for scrutiny and judgement.

The next finding is that a lack of staff training was a contributing factor. Teachers and senior staff were often aware of or suspicious about an individual's conduct, but the department provided no training to help them recognise the behaviour as abuse, understand its seriousness or know what to do about their suspicions.

Fifth, the inquiry found poor record-keeping and information-sharing practices also contributed. There was no requirement to document disclosures, investigations or the reasons for staff transfers and no consistent approach to sharing information with Victoria Police. As a result, convicted teachers could remain employed, sometimes their teaching registration not even being reviewed. This is an extremely important finding that I would like to take a moment to reflect on, because issues of information sharing and record keeping have been a contributing factor to the sexual abuse of children in Victorian childcare centres in very recent years. In 2025 a Melbourne childcare worker was charged with more than 150 offences against children in his care – offences he allegedly committed across some 20 centres over several years despite holding a valid working with children check throughout. These horrific instances of child sexual abuse occurred in childcare centres regulated by the government by laws laid down by this Parliament. The government's review into the matter found systemic failures in information sharing between regulators, legal constraints that limited how quickly risks could be acted on and inadequate resourcing of the oversight system meant to catch exactly this kind of danger. The details differ from the historical child sexual abuse for which we apologise today but the pattern does not. It is clear that we still have lessons to learn in this place about how we keep children safe.

Finally, the final finding of the board of inquiry in relation to the failures of the Department of Education was that there were no systemic reviews triggered or conducted. At no point – not at the time allegations first emerged, not when further concerns surfaced or advocacy was brought to bear – has the department conducted a review to understand the scale of historical abuse across government schools statewide. This meant patterns involving perpetrators and schools went unexamined, further children were put at risk and survivors were denied the chance to learn whether their experience was part of a wider pattern. For policymakers the lesson is clear: we must always be willing and ready to do whatever it takes to get answers, to shine a light and to bring transparency and accountability. An organisational culture of looking the other way, of avoiding the hard questions and of failing to be adequately self-reflective or self-critical must never be allowed to take place again, not in a single Victorian government department, agency or funded organisation. We must always ask the hard questions and ensure they are answered. We must always make sure early warning systems are baked in to organisations and programs so that risk can be identified and mitigated before vulnerable children pay the price.

Earlier in my remarks I stated that the survivors have been forced to wait too long for this day. Today has been a long time coming. That child sexual abuse occurred in state government schools is the first thing for which we apologise today, but the second thing we say sorry for is the second wrong we revisited on survivors: our silence over decades. Survivors have told the Forum for Truth and Recognition and told successive inquiries before it that what compounded the abuse itself was not being believed – being moved on or managed instead of listened to, being treated as a problem for the system that nobody could quite bring themselves to confront rather than as a person of inherent worth and dignity who had been gravely wronged by those who were supposed to care for them. There were

people who knew or should have known who did not act, people who were receiving a taxpayer-funded salary to do a job for the public good who instead caused the public immeasurable harm.

To every survivor who disclosed and was not heard or who never felt able to disclose at all, I say sorry. We failed to protect you and we covered up our shame for far too long, and we are sorry for this. To the survivors here today, to those who could not be here and to those who did not live to see this day, I want to say to you: what happened to you is not your shame to carry. As a state we failed you; that is our shame. You were children in the care of the state, and this state failed you. Nothing said in this chamber today can undo that, but I hope that finally being listened to, acknowledged and believed by the Parliament of Victoria is worth something. On behalf of the Liberal and Nationals coalition, I offer my sincerest hope that today's apology marks an important step toward your healing.

This Parliament said sorry today. Our task now is to make sure that word is honoured in every decision that follows it, that we learn the lessons and never again allow the most vulnerable among us, our children, to be hurt in our care. Children should be safe. They should have their innocence protected by the adults in their lives, and not just the adults in their lives but also the adults who make the decisions that affect their lives. Those adults are us, the people who make the laws in this state. This state failed to keep these children safe. We must learn the lessons, and we must make certain that what has happened in the past is never repeated in the future. We must pledge to do better and honour that pledge every day we come into this place. I commend the motion.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (12:11): Today, as the 60th Parliament of Victoria, we say sorry. We say sorry to every victim-survivor of child sexual abuse in Victorian government schools. I say sorry because it is the right thing to do. To those victim-survivors, to their families and supporters: I am sorry you were not kept safe. I am sorry that when evil was done to you, you could not speak up. I am sorry that when you did speak you were not believed. I am sorry that this state, its employees, its policymakers and its public servants collectively failed to keep you safe when it was the state that was trusted with your care.

The journey to this day has been far too long. The board of inquiry found sexual abuse occurred at Beaumaris Primary School from the 1960s to the end of the 1990s. It found the Department of Education never reviewed those allegations, even as more concerns emerged in 2000 and 2001. Some 20 years later Stuart Grimley, then a member of the Legislative Council, began to listen to survivors, including from Beaumaris. Together with his adviser Olivia Nicholls, they built relationships of trust that others had failed to earn.

On 6 December 2021 one of those survivors, Glen Fearnett, wrote to me. Glen told me what had happened at Beaumaris in the 1970s and in the 1980s and across the education department. He wrote of four offenders at one school. Each moved there after offending elsewhere. Each moved on after being forced out, and each was convicted. He wrote that the scale of it was, in his words, 'mind-boggling' and that offenders remained in state schools until 1993, until 1995. He pointed me to the ABC's Russell Jackson, who spent the time listening to victim-survivors and telling their stories.

I say today that I am ashamed of the reply that I sent Glen that day. I told him his concerns were a matter for Victoria Police, and I urged him in the strongest terms to take them there. There were many reasons for my response at the time, some of them deeply personal. Part of the reason was because of what I had seen and heard working at Catholic Education Melbourne during the Betrayal of Trust inquiry – an inquiry that I commend former Premier Baillieu for establishing and Ms Crozier from the other place for chairing, an inquiry that led to the establishment of the royal commission. I believed then, as I do now, that organisations accused of such crimes should never investigate themselves, but what I failed to recognise in Glen's email was far simpler and far more important. He was not asking me to investigate or to solve a problem. He was asking me, like every survivor since, simply to listen.

On 21 September 2022 in Queens Hall, Liv introduced me to Glen, the same day that Stuart moved a motion in the Legislative Council calling on the then Premier to apologise and for the government to

comply with its own model litigant guidelines. That motion passed the Council unanimously. After the 2022 election Stuart was not returned. I then made an active decision to pick up where he had left off. In early 2023 on three occasions in this place I sought leave to establish a joint select committee into abuse in government schools. Each time leave was denied. In June of that year the government established the board of inquiry into abuse at Beaumaris Primary School. I was pleased that this action was taken, but I was also somewhat disappointed because the focus remained just Beaumaris. For context, I say 'just Beaumaris', but for me it was somewhat personal. I attended Stella Maris primary school in Beaumaris in the early 1990s, just 1.5 kilometres down the road from Beaumaris Primary School, at a time when abuse was still occurring there. As I have said before, Beaumaris is only the tip of the iceberg. That inquiry, driven by victim-survivors and by Stuart, was the necessary lightning rod for something much greater.

In the same way that religious institutions moved clergy from parish to parish, the Department of Education moved its offenders from school to school. The crimes committed were not just at Beaumaris; they were across all government schools, and they were likely equal to or perhaps greater than those committed in non-government institutions. Yet it has taken until 2026 for this Parliament to say sorry. Focusing only on Beaumaris shut other survivors out, like Ingrid from Beaumaris North Primary School, just a kilometre down the road, who wrote to me in February 2023 about the sexual abuse she was subjected to as a child at that school. That is why the government was right to adopt recommendation 3 of the Beaumaris inquiry in full and establish the Forum for Truth and Recognition. That forum's report has now been tabled, and we await the department's parallel review and the government's formal response to both.

Thirty-eight victim-survivors told the forum their stories. Their words matter more than mine ever will. Grant Holland told the forum that sharing his story is scary but, in his words, it means 'you feel less alone'. James told the forum he wants to be, in his words, 'a voice that is heard' so others find courage to speak their truth. Daz Gibbs, first abused at just three years old, told the forum simply: 'I'm here and I'm alive … I'm doing OK.' One survivor, known only as Betty, described what was done to her plainly as not an experience but a crime. She had carried that alone for over 30 years before finding the strength to speak. These are not stories from a distant past we can leave behind. They are the lived reality of people in our community whose trust we should never take lightly. I think of Glen, who first wrote to me in 2021, and of Tim, Richard, Ingrid and every survivor who trusted me in this Parliament with their story. Their courage brought us to this day. Our task now is to be worthy of it every day after. This apology is not the end of our obligation, it is the beginning. We owe every survivor more than words; we owe them a system that finally truly protects children.

I must say that an apology like this is never the work of one person. It is an opportunity to remind ourselves that in some way we all stand on the shoulders of those that have gone before us, carrying a great responsibility. To Stuart Grimley and to Olivia Nicholls: thank you for listening and building trust when others did not. To every victim-survivor and your families and supporters who came forward: thank you. To Russell Jackson: thank you for being a journalist, not just a reporter – a journalist that gave voice to survivors when almost no-one else was listening. And thank you to colleagues across the Parliament who stood with survivors in their own way. I especially want to mention the member for Hastings and the member for Melton.

Today we have a chance as a Parliament and as a state to acknowledge the crimes committed against innocent and vulnerable children in our government schools. We cannot undo what has been done, but we can tell the truth about it and make sure it is never buried, dismissed or hidden again. This apology must not be where our efforts end; it must be where they deepen. We owe survivors more than sorrow; we owe them a system that learns, that listens and that never looks away again. That is one of the reasons why the opposition has agreed to include mandatory grooming awareness and abuse identification training as part of the working with children check application process.

I also want to say this today: Beaumaris Primary School today is an excellent school with outstanding teaching and learning, with outstanding principal leadership led by David Tapp and his assistant

principals Grace and Kelly, who I believe are in the parliamentary building today. These staff are deeply committed to child safety. That is what we owe every survivor – not just an apology for the past, but proof that lessons have been learned and a commitment to treat every Victorian with dignity and with respect.

In closing, this Parliament during this apology today has heard many words. Now the time for words has concluded. From this point, every one of us must be judged solely on our actions.

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

Sitting suspended 12:23 pm until 2:02 pm.

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge in the gallery Sunita Thapa, who is a member of the Gandaki Provincial Assembly in the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. Welcome.

Members

Attorney-General

Absence

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier, Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:02): I wish to advise the house that for the purposes of question time today the Minister for Police will answer questions for the portfolios of Attorney-General, planning, violence reduction and finance.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Suburban Rail Loop

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): My question is to the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop. Does the minister support cancelling or pausing the Suburban Rail Loop?

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:03): No.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): Does the minister stand by the cost estimate of $34.5 billion for Suburban Rail Loop East?

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:03): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the supplementary question. Back in May the opposition unleashed the member for Hawthorn at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. He asked me these questions ad infinitum, and I stand by the answers I gave at the budget estimates hearings. The Suburban Rail Loop East is on time and on budget.

Ministers statements: public transport

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier, Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:04): This morning the first 100 new G-class trams rolled out of the Essendon depot – a wonderful investment in public transport, not just for Melbourne but for Melbourne's western suburbs. These trams are designed around people, really importantly. They will take 150 passengers. More than that, they were built locally – 65 per cent local content manufacturing jobs in Dandenong. In addition, we know these trams will be able to take people with disability access. They will support environmental measures. They will be a game changer in Melbourne's west, and we are really proud of our investments in Melbourne's west too. We know what is at risk with a One Nation–Liberal government. Their record shows they had a smaller rolling stock agenda than the ACT, who do not even have trams. Under our government we invest in rolling stock, we invest in jobs and we invest in people. People, transport – we focus on the basics. Cost of living is what our government is all about.

Suburban Rail Loop

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): My question is to the Premier. The Premier told this house in relation to the Suburban Rail Loop:

> … we cannot wait to get on with this project.

Premier, what has changed?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier, Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:06): We are always getting on with transport projects under our government. We do not rip up railway lines in country Victoria. We invest in every part of Melbourne, whether it is in the south-east or the north-west. That is what our government will always do.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question was specifically around the Suburban Rail Loop. It was a very, very short and sharp question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has concluded his answer.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): In September 2023 the Premier called the Suburban Rail Loop a game changer. Was the game to bankrupt Victoria, or did the Premier simply never understand what he was signing taxpayers up to?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Mordialloc is warned. The member for Glen Waverley is warned. The member for Lara is warned.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier, Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:07): I do not quite know what that question was about. It was quite a word salad. What I will say is that the opposition leader raised budget. Every investment our government raises, every investment our government invests in, will deliver value for Victorians, and we will treat every dollar financially responsibly.

Ministers statements: food relief

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:08): The Carroll Labor government is delivering for Melbourne's west. I grew up in Altona, which is in Melbourne's west. The Premier is from the north-west, and we understand the opportunities and challenges for the west. We know that families in Melbourne's west are struggling with the cost of living, and even feeding your family can be a struggle in this economic climate. Around one in three Victorian households experience food insecurity each and every year, and the food relief sector is experiencing record demand. This is why this government, the Carroll government, has recently announced $5 million to support a massive expansion of SecondBite's distribution centre in Derrimut. This will triple SecondBite's food relief capacity across our state. The impact of this will be extraordinary, and over the next 10 years expansion will support the delivery of over 100 million meals, reaching an additional 316,000 households which are doing it tough under financial strain. Importantly, our investment will double food relief support to both regional and rural.

By contrast, those opposite would climb into bed with One Nation at the first chance that they get. They want to rip the guts out of frontline services to the tune of $40 billion.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister for struggle street does know that it is inappropriate for the minister to be using her statement in this way.

The SPEAKER: I will not uphold the point of order, because that is not an appropriate way to raise a point of order.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: I would like to think that that was not a swipe at carers or volunteers, but who knows with that person. Those opposite are so out of touch with Melbourne's west that they

just sacked one of their very few representatives from our region. But, guess what, it took four times to actually get rid of her, and you did it after we got told that Pauline Hanson did not even want her.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: I do not appreciate members on their feet being shouted down. It is very disrespectful. The minister to continue, without interruption.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: On this side we are committed to a new direction for Melbourne's west and for Victoria and building a stronger and more resilient relief system for all Victorians.

Suburban Rail Loop

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:11): My question is to the Premier. In June 2024 the Premier said:

> I am supportive of the project. We have taken Suburban Rail Loop to two elections.

Why is the Premier reviewing a project he supported at two elections when he was the former Premier's right-hand man?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier, Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:11): Investing in public transport is a good thing. It is good for the economy, it is good for tackling transport emissions and it helps people to get to where they need to get to.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:12): The Premier also said the SRL 'is an investment and we can afford it'. The minister for the SRL has just said he is not stopping or pausing the SRL. So what is the point of the review?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier, Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:12): I do not know what the member is referring to. All I can say is we are getting on with building world-class infrastructure. We are nation builders; they are One Nation builders.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The minister for housing will leave the chamber for half an hour. The Minister for Regional Development will leave the chamber for half an hour. Clapping is not allowed in the chamber at any time. Members will come to order.

Minister for Housing and Building and Minister for Regional Development withdrew from chamber.

Ministers statements: health services

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (14:13): I rise today to update the house on the government's record of investing in health for Victorians living in the west. Melbourne's west is one of the fastest growing regions in the country, which is why we are investing more than ever before in health, from new hospitals to expanded emergency departments and a brand new community hospital. In February we opened the $1.5 billion new Footscray Hospital, one of the largest ever hospital infrastructure projects in the state. It delivered an increase of nearly 200 beds and a new emergency department with a mental health, alcohol and other drugs hub as well. Most recently we completed the massive expansion of the Werribee Mercy Hospital, which will double the capacity of the emergency department. We are getting on with delivering new hospitals in Melton and Point Cook. The member for Melton will be chuffed to know that we are coming up to our first anniversary of construction at the Melton hospital. Six tower cranes have been installed, and around 350 workers are there daily. Speaking of the pace of construction, it was great to get to the Point Cook community

hospital earlier this year to celebrate the structural completion of that new hospital. We are now installing the facade and fitting out each floor with services.

On this side of the house we know that investing in our great public hospitals means vital access to life-saving care for working families. Let us compare that to the record of the opposition when they were last in government. They spent less on health infrastructure in the west than a council budget. The stakes of this election could not be higher for Victorians living in Melbourne's west. One Nation will privatise hospitals, and the Liberals' promise to cut $40 billion means frontline workers will be sacked. Under a Liberal–One Nation coalition, hospitals will be privatised and closed, healthcare workers will be sacked and programs will be scrapped.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:15): My question is for the Premier. The Premier has announced that the government will give IBAC follow-the-money powers. This is a limited but useful reform. There is little point in IBAC having follow-the-money powers if all it can do once it gets there is just look at it. The critical and necessary reform is to remove the restriction on IBAC which limits it to investigating part of a list of offences, including indictable offences. So much corruption is not strictly illegal, but it can still undermine public trust. Will the government amend the IBAC act to remove this restriction and enable IBAC to investigate what is often called grey corruption?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier, Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:16): Can I just acknowledge the member for Brunswick on his fine contribution and his valedictory last night. Under my government, integrity is not optional, it is fundamental. That is why I have established a royal commission, and it is why I am giving IBAC what they want. It is a fair question. They do not only need the teeth; they do need the resources. I have committed to sitting down with the IBAC Commissioner to work with them on what I can do to support them.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:17): We cannot be so naive as to think that we have seen Victoria's last corruption scandal. At some point there will be more. The Premier has committed to sitting down with IBAC and asking them what they want, although that is very clear in their submission to the IOC's inquiry into the IBAC legislation. Recommendation 1, a consensus recommendation of the committee, was to allow IBAC to investigate beyond criminal offences. What is stopping the government from going ahead and legislating this in the remaining weeks before Parliament is prorogued?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier, Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:17): Like every passage of legislation, it is important that it is right. It is important that it is clear. On our side we have committed to implementing everything in that report. It is the opposition leader who on radio said she does not support broadening the definition.

Ministers statements: TAFE funding

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Defence Industry, Minister for Skills and TAFE) (14:18): Did you know that if someone decided to travel to each of the 88 electorates in Victoria to take a selfie, on average every fourth electorate they went to would have a TAFE campus that was closed by the previous Liberal–National government? That is right. The previous Liberal–National government closed 22 campuses across Victoria as part of their shameful $1 billion worth of cuts to TAFE. Those cuts also resulted in 2000 TAFE teachers losing their jobs. While those opposite closed TAFE campuses, Labor has opened or upgraded 45 campuses across the state. In fact we have invested some $16 billion in base and additional funding in TAFE, and we have introduced free TAFE, offering now 80 courses.

There is more investment to come under the Carroll Labor government. We will build a $55 million TAFE campus in Melbourne's west at Cobblebank. I was out onsite last week with the hardworking

member for Melton and the great Labor candidate Broden Borg. The Carroll Labor government will also build a $25 million TAFE campus in Sunbury. This is all about giving Victorians the opportunity to get the skills they need for the future and building the workforce our economy needs to grow. We know this is all at risk. We know what $40 billion worth of cuts would do to TAFE. A Hanson–Wilson government would rip the guts out of TAFE and leave Victorians without the training that they need.

Government integrity

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:20): My question is to the Premier. The Premier says integrity will no longer be optional. The Premier has previously attended a private CFMEU fundraising lunch hosted by John Setka.

Members interjecting.

James NEWBURY: Shameful, mate.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will be removed from the chamber. I know it is Thursday; it has been a big week for all members. But I think you need to show some respect.

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Speaker, I know that FOMO is not a point of order, but I just ask the member for Brighton to ask his question, please.

James NEWBURY: The Premier says integrity will no longer be optional. The Premier has previously attended a private CFMEU fundraising lunch hosted by John Setka. Why was the integrity of government optional when the Premier attended a lunch hosted by a man with more than 40 criminal convictions?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier, Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:21): Every time the member for Brighton gets on his feet, I always think of that Michelle Obama quote: when they go low, you go high.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, what is the point of the relevance rule if the Premier keeps prematurely finishing?

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:22): The invitation to the private CFMEU lunch attended by the Premier promoted 'the billions of dollars in government infrastructure work available to union members and affiliated builders'. What commitments did the Premier make to the CFMEU about preferential access to taxpayer-funded projects?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier, Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:23): It is breaking news that the Shadow Attorney-General knows how to use Google. No commitments were given.

Ministers statements: health infrastructure

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Cost of Living, Minister for Renters, Minister for Men and Boys) (14:23): Yes, they have had a bad week. Only Labor is focused on making it easier and cheaper –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bulleen, off you go – an hour. Minister for Youth – half an hour. Members will not speak, not laugh, not clap and not enjoy themselves while I am on my feet.

Member for Bulleen and Minister for Youth withdrew from chamber.

Paul EDBROOKE: Only Labor is focused on making it easier and cheaper for Victorian families to get the health care they deserve. Take it from someone who has had their fair share of trips to the emergency department when I say that every minute matters. But it does not take a plane crash to

know why it is so important that Labor is putting care closer to home. We have built 12 new hospitals and hired 17,000 more nurses and midwives. Just ask the member for Footscray what a game changer the new Footscray Hospital is, or the member for Melton, now that construction has started on the Melton hospital, or the member for Point Cook, where we are delivering a new community hospital. Our free virtual ED gives Victorians urgent care from home without the trip, without the bill, and Chemist Care Now gets you the scripts you need from your pharmacy without going to the GP. And we have funded 50,000 more surgeries and specialist appointments for kids, because no child should wait and no family should go without. That is cost-of-living relief where it matters most. But, you know what, it is all at risk because the One Nation–Liberal coalition are promising $40 billion worth of cuts. They would cut hospitals. They would cut surgery. They would sack every nurse.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a misuse of a ministers statement.

The SPEAKER: Come back to the ministers statement without attacking the opposition, Minister.

Paul EDBROOKE: It is a hoax. You cannot promise $40 billion in cuts and a new hospital in the same breath and only –

James Newbury: On a further point of order, Speaker, the minister is defying your ruling.

The SPEAKER: The minister did not refer to the opposition, but the minister is to come back to his ministers statement.

Paul EDBROOKE: He is as sharp as a marble. Only Labor makes health care easier, cheaper and closer to home, and we will continue to do that. We will continue to stand up for Victorians and make sure they get the health care that they need.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I do seek your advice. I understand and am not reflecting in any way on any decision in relation to members being ejected from the chamber, but with the Premier's premature finishing, any 1-hour ejection now means that members miss an entire week of question time.

The SPEAKER: Noted.

Constituency questions

Kew electorate

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:28): (1728) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. When will the government install a pedestrian crossing on Barkers Road in Kew between Auburn Road and Glenferrie Road? I have raised this issue with the minister a number of times since June 2023 in this place and through correspondence. In November last year, in an adjournment speech, I again asked the minister to prioritise this much-needed pedestrian crossing. I said: the people of Kew need these upgrades now. They cannot wait until after someone gets hurt. But I regret to inform the minister that last week a student was struck by a car on Barkers Road exactly where this pedestrian crossing is needed. We are so fortunate that the student is recovering well, but once again I ask the minister: when will the government finally install a pedestrian crossing on Barkers Road to keep our students safe?

Tarneit electorate

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (14:29): (1729) My question is to the Minister for Planning. How is our government supporting my community through our landmark planning reforms? Many constituents in Tarneit still cannot access a normal bus to and from their own homes. We know that the previous terrible decision-making by the former Liberal government has led to negative planning outcomes for my community living in Tarneit North. In 2014 the Liberal government approved a rushed precinct structure plan just before the caretaker period under the then planning minister, the member for Bulleen, that allowed local roads to be constructed around Tarneit North which cannot even fit a bus.

Members of my community are now suffering from that poor planning decision-making all those years ago. This government, a Carroll Labor government, will always support appropriate planning in our outer suburbs that will allow the critical infrastructure to be built around it.

Eildon electorate

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (14:30): (1730) My question is for the Minister for Planning. Residents of and near McMahons Road in Launching Place have concerns about the proposed expansion of the Yarra Valley Quarries in their immediate vicinity. Can the minister explain why she does not require an environment effects statement for the expansion for this project? Locals are concerned about the impact of this expansion from a number of points of view, including dust, noise, water quality and increased truck movements. The junction between McMahons Road and Dalry Road is pretty dodgy at the best of times, and residents are very concerned about that. I understand that there is an important balance to be struck between developments such as this and community amenity, and I would appreciate a prompt response from the minister.

Monbulk electorate

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (14:31): (1731) My question is for the Minister for Environment. Would the minister consider increasing support for the deer control program to address the scourge of deer across the Dandenong Ranges? Many of my constituents across the Dandenongs have raised concerns about deer, including growers, private landowners, environmental advocates and drivers who have experienced collisions or near misses on our roads due to their presence. It is well known that deer inflict significant damage across our region. They destroy indigenous plants, trample sensitive habitat and threaten fauna and biodiversity in our national parks and reserves. They damage private fences, gardens and agricultural crops, and they are creating serious safety risks on our roads, which I know personally. There is nothing quite so confronting as coming face to face with a full-grown 300-kilogram sambar stag with antlers spanning more than half a metre while out on your morning walk. And while encounters like this are becoming increasingly common, the impact of deer on our environment, agriculture and road safety is far more concerning.

Murray Plains electorate

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:32): (1732) My question is to the Minister for Government Services. Can the minister explain why this Labor government has designed the eligible volunteer rebate scheme in such an unnecessarily complex and inaccessible way that many of the very volunteers it is supposed to reward are effectively locked out of claiming it? I have been contacted by a constituent who, as a CFA life member, volunteered from 1989 to 2017. Yet when he and his wife attempted to claim the fire services levy rebate, they found themselves caught in a bureaucratic maze. The irony is this couple consider themselves computer literate and have extensive experience dealing with government systems through their professional careers. If people with those skills cannot successfully navigate this process, what hope is there for volunteers with limited digital skills or those without reliable internet access? This government has created a process so cumbersome many people will simply give up, forfeiting a rebate they earned through years of service to their communities. Is this actually the plan to stop people claiming this to save the government debt?

Greenvale electorate

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (14:33): (1733) My question is for the Minister for Environment. Last year we reopened Greenvale Reservoir Park for the benefit of our community with $3 million of funding that I secured. Last week I was delighted to join Minister Erdogan to formally open a beautiful, brand new playground at the park. Today we are announcing a further $1.5 million investment to deliver further upgrades at Greenvale Reservoir Park. My question is: Minister, how will this new investment benefit families across Greenvale and the north-west?

Rowville electorate

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (14:33): (1734) My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, the question I ask is: when will the Carroll Labor government finally provide the urgent funding required to fix the crumbling roads and dangerous potholes right across the Rowville electorate? For years I have stood in this place and highlighted the deplorable state of our local roads, particularly our main arterial roads: Ferntree Gully, Stud, High Street, Kelletts, Napoleon and Wellington roads. My constituents in Rowville electorate are sick and tired of footing the bill for blown tyres and cracked rims because this government simply cannot get the basics right. While the Labor government oversees billions in Big Build blowouts, our local roads have been completely neglected, relying on half-hearted patch-up jobs that wash away in the very next downpour. In stark contrast, the Liberal–National coalition have just announced a $5 billion 2026 state election commitment to eliminate 1 million potholes.

Preston electorate

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (14:34): (1735) My question is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, and my question is: have outcomes improved for tenants challenging excessive rent increases since the establishment of Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria in June of 2025? We very much welcome the introduction of RDRV as a free and accessible dispute resolution service. We acknowledge that rent affordability remains amongst the most significant cost-of-living pressures that are facing Victorians right across the state but including in Preston and Reservoir. We are aware of course, all of us, that there was a period in 2022 and 2023 when we saw rents increasing very sharply. We are pleased that that has moderated somewhat on average, but nonetheless we do continue to be contacted by local residents in Preston and Reservoir who are feeling the pressure of high rents and rent increases. Any information that the minister can provide to us about how RDRV is supporting those residents and helping them challenge excessive rent increases would be greatly appreciated.

Polwarth electorate

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:35): (1736) My question this afternoon is for the newly minted Premier, and my question is: Premier, when you were Minister for Roads and Road Safety over the early 2020s, up until 2023, the electors and road users of Polwarth suffered the biggest cuts to road maintenance and road funding in recent history. In fact there was a 90 per cent cut when you were roads minister to the roads of Polwarth. Now, as Premier, can you confirm for the people of Polwarth whether you will in fact, in order to balance this budget, continue your cutting habits and slash further the road funding in the seat of Polwarth over the coming months and years if you remain in the job as Premier, or is it a fact that if a change of government occurs at the end of November with a fresh start, the people of Polwarth can in fact expect a billion dollars more a year spent on the roads?

Mulgrave electorate

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (14:36): (1737) My question is for the Minister for Cost of Living. How many people across my electorate of Mulgrave have claimed the Victorian Labor government's 20 per cent off car rego? The 20 per cent rebate closes this Friday. That is up to $186 back in Victorians' pockets, or $372 if they have two cars, for registration paid in the last financial year. I know many in my community have already taken advantage of this Labor government initiative helping them with cost of living, but I want to make sure everyone eligible applies before Friday. I have held numerous mobile offices, taking the application process to local shopping centres and community groups, and my team and I have helped countless Mulgrave residents with their application at my office. I encourage residents to get on the Service Victoria app with their bank details, registration number and licence details, or they can pop into my office before Friday to get assistance.

Bills

Corrections Amendment Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Employment, Minister for Tourism) (14:38): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Firearms Amendment Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:39): I rise to speak on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026. In rising for this bill, it is obviously a fairly sensitive bill within the community at the moment and has been for a long time. Just to put it into context in relation to firearms reform not just in Victoria but across Australia over our time, I think every person in this chamber would be old enough to remember what happened on 28 April 1996 when Martin Bryant killed 35 people and injured 23 others down in Port Arthur. Everyone remembers that tragedy. It was a huge, huge tragedy across the whole of the country which the world froze for. It was something that we did not really hear of here in Australia or did not understand in Australia. We had seen it overseas. I think most people knew someone who was attached or involved with it, and it impacted everyone across the entire country.

At that time we all recall that there was a pretty big push then for firearms reform here in Australia, and it would have impacted each state for that reform to happen. Our Prime Minister at the time John Howard started the process of going through that reform. When it first came out there were mixed reviews. There were some people out there that were very much anti any reform, and there was a group who were very supportive. We would have to say and agree that a majority of the community were supportive of that reform. There was a pretty big campaign by gun lobbyists. We saw that in the day and we recall many images. Some of those John Howard has spoken about since – turning up to an event with a bulletproof vest on because of the fear that was out there. I know that it is one of those things where he looks back now and I think regrets what he did on that day. But you do understand, though, at that time the tension that was within the community around what had happened.

I know that some of our regional members who will be speaking on this will talk about the impact. Even if we look back then, farmers came out who were genuinely concerned about the use of firearms on their properties – they do use them. Legal firearms users across the state – who are still in that position today, still legal firearms users across Victoria – were fearful they were going to get caught up in this national firearms reform. Then the agreement came out and we had the amnesty for people to hand in or sell their firearms back with a buyback system from the national government. I think no-one today would disagree that that reform was a positive, and we have seen less firearms on the streets here in Australia.

It is interesting. We still have shooters clubs and firearms and ranges. We still have people who have legal firearms. We still have consequences every so often of shootings here in Victoria and across the nation – not to the degree that we saw recently in Bondi. But up until then we would still see incidents of mainly individual cases of firearm shootings, which would be very difficult to totally rule out and totally get rid of. Therefore the target was to take away the high-powered automatic rifles, and I think

overall it was very well received. We have seen since then – and I think most members would have seen them, whether it is on Instagram or TikTok or whatever they watch – that there are always memes and things about those firearms changes, and they do the comparison to the United States.

I have had this discussion with the new Premier before when we talked about youth crime. It is one of the things that we do agree on, and we have spoken about it in the past. We both have read a book from America by Geoffrey Canada – I have spoken about it in here before – which is *Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun*. It speaks about the changes in youth crime through the United States, focusing mostly on New York. You see the change from a group of young people in the street who used to go out and have a fistfight in the street – someone brought a stick to the fight – and it goes on, progressing and eventually ending up with a firearm. The one thing I can say here in Australia is that whilst we are going through knife and blade weapons at the moment, we have not really seen that major move to firearms on the streets in those particular instances. Again, we see some random ones right now, but not with youth having firearms. That is very much something we should look back at that federal government from 1996 for: having the courage to go out and do what they did at the time.

On 14 December 2025 we saw another terrorist attack here on our shores. As we all know, that was the Bondi terrorist attack. At that Hanukkah celebration 15 people were killed and 41 others were injured. Again, it was an absolute tragedy, the lives that were lost up there at Bondi. Many leaders from the community and from all sides of politics came out and spoke about the disaster that that was and the impact, and particularly the impact on the Jewish community. It was obviously a very targeted terrorist attack, and it was linked to or part of, you could see, a chain of attacks that had been happening across the country because of the antisemitism that was happening and occurring on our streets. Whether it was starting back from some of the things like graffiti, the more we saw a blind eye turned to those crimes happening on what we would say may have been a smaller scale, we started to see an increase in those crimes, getting to a stage where we saw protests outside synagogues. We saw Addas synagogue firebombed; we saw Melbourne East synagogue firebombed and targeted. We saw the families and homes of rabbis targeted by terrorists here in this state, much of it being organised from overseas. Tragically, over time we saw an increase. I think the challenge is that when we continued to almost allow some of the protests that were on the street dividing and creating hate, particularly here in Victoria – and we saw one or two up in New South Wales – when we saw that, it almost became acceptable. Then it gets to a stage where we start to see people acting further on that hate and that division.

What we saw in Bondi was something that we never want to see again, so it was vital that, from a federal position, they went in and did the review so we could try to ensure not just that we strengthen the gun laws but that our gun laws are in the best position they can be. There was a report done federally, and obviously we had a report done down here, the Lay report. I have a lot of time for Ken Lay. He has been involved with Victoria Police for a long time. He is very respected from his time in Victoria Police. He has an understanding of the impact of violent crime across our nation, and he put forward what he thought when he was part of that rapid review down here in Victoria. From that rapid review we have come out with the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026, which the government has put forward and which we will not oppose. There are some elements in there that we have got no dramas or issues with at all. We know it implements significant reforms to the firearm and regulatory framework. It gives effect to the recommendations, mostly from that independent review conducted by Ken Lay, as I said, and the government did accept 15 of the 16 recommendations.

One of the concerns that we will raise in the scheme of the legislation – and we will consider our position later on with this – is the introduction of AusCheck. AusCheck will be the Commonwealth's proposed national background checking system into our firearm licensing. The reason we are raising a concern is it does not actually exist at the moment. We do not know the cost of it. We do not know how it is going to be implemented. We just think this is something that should be put in legislation possibly later. It is pre-emptive when you do not know the cost or how much it is going to cost for someone to legally go and get their licence here in our state.

I know that I and – I am pretty confident – the speakers on this side, when we speak about this, will all be speaking highly of the fact that we know we have actually got a lot of very good, legal, honest firearms holders here in this state, whether that is for work purposes or whether it is for purposes of sport and entertainment. We are even seeing licences that can be used for younger people to get them into the sport and to get insurance. They can get involved in their community, and it is a positive community to be involved with. Firearms holders, firearms shooters and sporting shooters associations are great communities to be involved with. I will actually go even further: they are genuinely probably some of the most disciplined organisations to be involved with because of the safety requirements. It is not like a football hits you in the head while you are just sitting around and you might get a bit of a black eye or a sore back of the head. Obviously the safety concerns when it comes to firearms are extreme, so it teaches discipline to this generation and the next generation who are coming through. We are also very proud that we have had gold medal winners in firearms competitions around the world. So we know how important the firearms industry is. On top of that it is a very big and welcome part of our economy. Whether you go out to regional parts of Victoria or you see shooting competitions in places like Lilydale or down in Lara – we have got the firearms ranges down there – it attracts people from interstate to come down and shoot as well, and that is obviously a positive thing for our economy. They stay in the accommodation, they eat the food in the area and they generally support the local economy as well.

The other side of that from the legal element is that – I can use my own electorate, where we go up into Upper Beaconsfield – we have, it is fair to say, a major issue with deer. It has got to the stage – I should not have, but I made a joke about it before – where you can sit at the local pub there now and the deer will come up and have a pot with you, because there are that many deer in Upper Beaconsfield. They are a danger on the road –

Peter Walsh interjected.

Brad BATTIN: No, they do not pay for the beer, especially if you are sitting there as a shooter. They do not really want to sit with you too often. But we do have an issue on the roads up there with the amount of deer causing accidents. We have legal culling programs which we use industry groups for, to come in and work with us to reduce the impact of them not just on our roads but also on our environment, because they can pose some massive challenges to our environment through areas like Yellingbo et cetera, where we have some of the natives and small clusters of birds et cetera that could be extinct in the future, like the helmeted honeyeater.

There are those that raised the issue of AusCheck with me, which we made sure we would in here, particularly around the costs as one of the things, and concerns were raised around what was going to be done to legislate it. The advice provided indicated AusCheck may take several years to become fully operational, so we are just unclear on the framework and the timing that they have got within this legislation and how that will impact with AusCheck moving forward.

Another section that has been raised and that I will quickly touch on is the citizenship requirement. We went out to all of the shooting associations and received feedback from them. First and foremost, and I think this is an important inclusion, people, even if they are permanent residents, who use their firearm for work purposes will still be exempt. That is not going to change. But a person who is currently a permanent resident and has a firearm and wants to continue to use that firearm when they renew their licence – it will be grandfathered until they renew their licence – at that stage must consider becoming an Australian citizen. I think when I first had a look at that I knew there were going to be some concerns raised, but it was not as many as I thought might be raised. But for those people that do have their firearms, hopefully there is a process for them to get more information quickly so they can go through the process to get their citizenship so they can continue with their firearms licence and their shooting and being involved in the sporting associations moving forward.

The same people who came in and spoke about the delays also raised the other issue in relation to applying for a firearms licence these days: that it can take a long time. That is a police shortage issue.

Obviously, as we all know, there are many police stations that are closed. There are stations that used to be 24 hours and now operate for 7 hours or 8 hours on one day a week. If you are a person who wants to get into the sport, you might not be available on Tuesday to go down to the station and get the paperwork and get it signed. So I think it is really important that if we are going to make these changes and make it rightfully difficult to get your licence so that only the right people can get their licence, then we have to have the facilities there so people can go in and get their licence when they are required.

There are some sections in here too around penalties – increasing the maximum penalty for certain firearms offences from 10 to 15 years imprisonment. Whilst there have been some questions raised around this, one of the questions, I think, if the government can look at this later, is just in relation to if it applies to minors. What is the age limit on it? Is it only over 18 for the extension, or will it be expanded with young people in relation to the firearms offences? It is probably something we should consider, because we want to be pretty strict that illegal firearms are not something we ever want to see on the streets; we do not want to be going down that path, as I said before, of stick, fist, knife – we want to make sure that we can avoid the gun section of it. I think the best way to do that is education but also ensuring that the penalties are there, that people do not want to go down the path of having an illegal firearm when they are here in Victoria.

As far as it goes here for the legislation, we do support it. I can speak for myself, and I can speak for most of my colleagues: we are very pro when it comes to the shooting fraternity here in Victoria. I have seen the positive impact of them. I am not a shooter; I put that out there. I am not a shooter myself. I have never had a firearms licence. I carried a firearm whilst I was a police officer. You do not require a licence; you are exempt. But I have never had a firearms licence. I will be honest: I shot my uncle's firearm once, and I missed a rabbit and shot his sheep, so it was best that I did not keep shooting in the future. I chose not to continue down the path of being a shooter. The only other time I went out, believe it or not – I made a joke before about a deer coming into the pub – was with the Sporting Shooters Association, and they were doing their culling program up through Yellingbo. I actually only went out because I thought it was important that if we were making decisions – we were in government at the time – around culling and we were saying it was humane, I should go and see what they were doing, how they were doing it and the process. I thought it was really important. I am going to use all the wrong terms, so no laughing from the Chair. We were sitting in a little tent thing, and he had his firearm there. He had some scopes, and he gave one to me – without a firearm attached, because he knew how bad a shot I was. He had the one with the firearm attached. He said to me – we were whispering, because you want the deer to come a little bit closer – 'You can have a look through.' And I said, 'How close do they get?' And he goes, 'They don't get that close because they can smell the dog. They know we're here.' And as he put it up and turned a light on, literally closer than I am to you, Speaker, there was a deer, and he missed. It was more out of shock.

It is really important, though, that we are backing those people that are out there as sporting shooters. We need to be supporting them. We need to be sending a very clear message. There is a small element within the community and probably within the Parliament who are anti – anti everything, but particularly anti the shooters here in our state. The Liberals and Nationals have always stuck by them, not just because of the farmers and clearing their property, but we genuinely believe it is a good and proper recreational sport. I will go back to where I started with that. Having a sport where young people can come in and be involved is a great alternative to them not being involved in something, particularly in regional areas, because idle hands are the devil's playground. We want to make sure that kids can be engaged in something that they enjoy. Some of these kids go on to the air shooting or the pistol shooting – there are many pathways for them to go on. I went out to Lilydale and met some of the shooters there that ended up going over to the United States. They compete over in the United States. Our guys go over there themselves with a little briefcase with probably two firearms in it. They go up against organisations or experts over in America that drive around in buses with full staffing et cetera, and yet we still compete so well on the world stage. We compete well on the world stage

with people here in Victoria because we have got, generally, a Parliament that backs firearms and shooting here in our state and we do believe that it is a genuine sport here in Victoria.

I said I was going to be aware timewise because I know a few people want to speak on this, and we have got a shorter period to do it today. I acknowledge we have to, here in this state, always consider firearms. We have to always consider who is holding firearms. We have to always consider what firearms are available – the rapid fires and all those sorts of things. Again, there are terms that I will not go through, because I do not know half of them. But we have to ensure that with what we do have out there, we can improve and highlight the safety measures as much as possible. Bondi should never have happened. What happened down in Tasmania, at Port Arthur, should never have happened. But they both did, and we cannot go back and change that. But what we can do to respect and honour those families, particularly up in Bondi, which happened most recently, is send a clear message that the Parliament is going to do everything it can to ensure that firearms do not fall into the hands of the wrong people. We must make sure that they cannot be traded so easily – whether it is across borders or with people that should not hold those firearms – that it does not matter who is in government when it comes to this, and that each and every day we are protecting our sporting shooters, we are protecting our farmers and we are protecting those that legally use guns but at the same time balancing it to make sure that firearms, particularly high-powered firearms, are not falling into the wrong people's hands here in Victoria and, I hope, the whole way across Australia. I would hate to be in government when a tragedy like this happens again. I just think it would, obviously, be one of the worst nightmares. But if we can do this right and we get behind the changes mostly in here and not oppose this bill, and it goes through in this form, I think it will actually make sure that we can partially achieve that. You can never guarantee firearms will not fall into the hands of the wrong people, but this Parliament will be doing its bit to ensure that they do not.

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Employment, Minister for Tourism) (15:00): 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

Adjournment

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (15:01): I move:

> That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 11 August 2026.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

Firearms Amendment Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

> That this bill be now read a second time.

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (15:01): I rise to speak on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026. At its heart this bill is about one simple principle: keeping Victorians safe while continuing to support responsible gun ownership. Across Ripon and throughout rural and regional Victoria guns are part of everyday life. Farmers use them for pest control and protecting livestock, recreational hunters enjoy getting out into the bush with family and friends, and sporting shooters dedicate countless hours to training and competition through local clubs. The overwhelming majority of firearm licence holders

are responsible, law-abiding people. They store their firearms safely, follow the rules and understand the responsibilities that come with owning a gun. I want to make it clear from the outset that this bill is not directed at those people. This bill is directed at organised criminals, firearm traffickers, extremists and individuals who present a risk to the safety of our community. Good firearm laws must strike the right balance. They must protect the rights of legitimate firearm users while making it as difficult as possible for firearms to fall into the wrong hands. That is exactly what this bill seeks to do.

These reforms come in the wake of the horrific terrorist attacks at Sydney's Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025. On that day Australians gathering to celebrate Hanukkah were targeted in an act of hatred and violence. Fifteen innocent people lost their lives. Dozens more were injured. Families were torn apart. Communities were left grieving. The attack shocked our whole nation. It was not just the scale of the tragedy that affected Australians; it was the fact that people had come together to celebrate their faith, spend time with loved ones and take part in a community event, only to be confronted by unimaginable violence. Our thoughts remain with the families who lost their loved ones that day, those who suffered injuries, those who witnessed the attack and the wider Jewish community, who continue to carry the pain and trauma of that day.

Following the attack, governments across Australia recognised the need to review whether our firearm laws were keeping pace with emerging threats, organised crime and extremist violence. National cabinet agreed that stronger and more consistent firearm regulations were needed across the country. This bill is a part of that response. It is about learning from tragedy and doing everything we reasonably can to make sure firearms do not end up in the hands of people who may pose a serious risk to the community.

The development of this bill has also been informed by the rapid review of Victoria's firearms laws conducted by Ken Lay AO APM. The final report of the government's response was released on 25 May this year, and the government made its position clear: we must continue strengthening our firearm laws while supporting legitimate firearm use.

This bill delivers on that commitment through five key reforms. First, it makes the firearm prohibition order scheme permanent. Firearm prohibition orders, or FPOs, have been operating since 2018. They allow Victoria Police to prohibit high-risk individuals from acquiring, possessing, carrying or using firearms and firearm-related items. Victoria Police has repeatedly said these powers are one of the most effective tools available for disrupting serious and organised crime. These orders are not applied lightly. They are targeted at people who police believe pose a genuine risk to public safety because of their criminal history, behaviour or associations. Since the scheme was introduced thousands of orders have been issued and thousands of charges have been laid for breaches. The evidence is clear that the scheme is working. Without this legislation today, the scheme would expire in May 2018. This bill ensures that does not happen, because if Victoria Police have a tool that prevents dangerous individuals from accessing firearms it simply makes sense to keep that tool available.

The bill also strengthens penalties for people who ignore firearm prohibition orders. A person who has been prohibited from possessing firearms has already been identified as someone who should not have access to guns. If that person deliberately chooses to possess and use firearms anyway, they are putting the community at risk. That is why the maximum penalty for possessing, carrying or using a firearm while subject to an FPO will increase from 10 years imprisonment to 15 years imprisonment. The same increase will apply to people who knowingly supply firearms to someone who is prohibited from possessing them. These are serious offences, and they deserve serious consequences.

The second major reform relates to firearms trafficking. Illegal firearms trafficking fuels organised crime. The more guns that find their way into criminal networks, the greater the risk to public safety. This bill introduces a clear distinction between different levels of firearms trafficking. Under the reforms, possessing between two and nine firearms unlawfully will be treated as a trafficable quantity. Possessing 10 or more firearms unlawfully will be treated as a large trafficable quantity. That distinction matters. Someone unlawfully dealing with 10 or more firearms presents a very different

risk to someone involved in lower level offending. The law should recognise that difference. Under this bill offences involving large trafficable quantities of firearms will attract significantly tougher penalties, including penalties of up to 15 years imprisonment. These changes make sure the most serious firearms trafficking operations face penalties that reflect the danger they pose to the Victorian community.

The third reform introduces a citizenship requirement for firearms licensing. Under the bill firearms licence holders will generally be required to be Australian citizens or New Zealand citizens who are permanent residents or otherwise fall within specified exemptions. Importantly, exemptions will apply where a person genuinely requires a firearm to earn a livelihood. The legislation also includes safeguards, including written notification requirements, opportunities to provide evidence and review rights. This reform is designed to strengthen confidence in Victoria's licensing system while making sure appropriate protections remain in place.

The fourth reform establishes a Commonwealth firearms background-checking regime through AusCheck. This is a significant national reform. AusCheck already undertakes background checking for workers in some of Australia's most security-sensitive industries and facilities. The new system will allow relevant national security and intelligence information to be considered when firearms-licensing decisions are made. Importantly, this means agencies such as ASIO and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission will be able to contribute information that may identify security risks, organised crime links or other serious concerns. A stronger national approach to information sharing makes sense and will help ensure potentially dangerous individuals are identified before they gain access to guns.

Finally, the bill modernises the way firearms can be categorised. Firearms technology is constantly evolving. These amendments will allow Victoria to respond more quickly when new firearm technologies emerge that may create risks not anticipated under existing laws. This gives police and government greater flexibility to act quickly where necessary while maintaining consistency with national firearm arrangements.

I also want to acknowledge the important contribution of sporting shooters, hunting organisations and local firearm clubs across the electorate of Ripon. These organisations do tremendous work promoting safe firearm use, education, training and responsible participation. I thank the amazing volunteers who dedicate their time to running clubs, mentoring new members and maintaining a culture of safety. That includes the Ballarat Pistol Club, Ararat Rifle Club, Ararat & Stawell Field & Game, Ararat Clay Target Club, Clunes Field & Game, Dunolly Field & Game, Beaufort Gun Club, Maryborough & District Gun Club, Maryborough Rifle Club, St Arnaud Gun Club and St Arnaud Rifle Club. These clubs demonstrate something that is often forgotten in public debate: responsible firearm ownership and strong firearm laws are not opposing ideas. In fact, many responsible firearm owners are among the strongest advocates for keeping guns out of criminal hands. They understand that community confidence in firearms ownership depends on strong licensing, strong compliance and strong penalties for those who abuse the system.

I also want to acknowledge the engagement of stakeholder groups, including the Sporting Shooters Association of Victoria and others who have contributed constructively throughout the development of these reforms. Their input has helped ensure that government has achieved an appropriate balance.

This bill does not place a cap on the number of firearms a person may lawfully own. It does not undermine legitimate farming, hunting or sporting activities. What it does do is strengthen the safeguards around who can access firearms and increase the penalties for those who seek to misuse them. Ultimately, this bill sends a clear message: if you are a responsible firearm owner who follows the law, these reforms are not aimed at you, but if you are a firearm trafficker, an organised criminal, an extremist or someone who presents a serious risk to our community, Victoria will continue to strengthen its laws to stop guns getting into your hands. That is a goal I believe every Victorian can support. I commend the bill to the house.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (15:11): I am pleased to rise on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026, which comes from a background of sheer tragedy – an appalling waste of life and an appalling terrorist act in New South Wales in Bondi. But it is important that governments around the nation respond in appropriate measure. I have never supported and the Nationals will never support making law-abiding firearms owners pay for the actions of terrorists or criminals. I did not agree with much of what the former Premier had to say in her policies, but I did agree and do agree with the government's rejection of the Ken Lay recommendation for a cap on individual firearms owners. That would have been an absurd position, and I am very pleased that the government has chosen not to implement that recommendation from the Ken Lay review.

The simple fact of this is that – and New South Wales has done this for reasons that are beyond me, political, obviously – capping the number of guns for every firearms owner would have had no impact on the Bondi event. There were three firearms involved in the Bondi event, and we also know that there were improvised explosive devices available. We also know that if terrorists do not have guns or do not have improvised explosive devices, they will use knives, they will use trucks, they will use vehicles, they will use whatever. It is not appropriate for governments to penalise law-abiding firearms owners in response to these events. Again, as I said, it is not a position I find myself in very often, but I actually commend the government for not accepting the recommendation to implement caps.

There are elements of this bill that I am certainly concerned about, and I will go to those in a moment. This legislation imposes a citizenship requirement on anyone who owns a firearm or has a firearms licence and makes various amendments to the Firearms Amendment Act 2018. In particular, it makes amendments to firearm prohibition order offences, including penalties for failing to notify the Chief Commissioner of Police of a change of address. It defines a new threshold for trafficable firearms and inserts new chief commissioner cancellation rights over dealers' licences. It also gives the chief commissioner new powers to reclassify firearms categories for 12 months, which is a little bit of a concern. I understand the chief commissioner has interim powers now, and these will be temporary powers, or it may be the other way around. I am happy to be corrected on that. We did ask in the government briefing what that means, what the difference is, and it was not clear. We did ask for the government to come back to us, as far as I am aware, via the shadow minister. We did not get an answer to that question: what is the difference between the existing powers and the new powers? Whilst the chief commissioner needs to have those powers, it is important that they are used appropriately. We have seen in the past attempts by governments and police across the nation to reclassify certain firearms simply because they look a bit scary or they are a bit different and new, and we need to have people who actually understand firearms and what their uses are. The classic example of where that has not occurred was the New South Wales Premier's references to belt-loaded shotguns, which are something that does not exist – there is no such thing as a belt-loaded shotgun. So we need to have people making decisions based on reality.

Frankly, the fact that national cabinet met the very day after Bondi and made a whole lot of recommendations that this legislation is coming from appalled me. It is an appalling way to go about policy. I know that governments feel the need to react and react quickly, but to be literally making commitments the day after the Bondi tragedy I think was hasty and kneejerk and silly and had the power, as it did in New South Wales, to actually unfairly penalise law-abiding firearms owners. So when it comes to the chief commissioner's new powers of reclassification, I am concerned as to how they will be used and as to the actual detail behind them. Absolutely, there are developments in firearms, and I understand this is largely directed towards the potential for 3D-printed firearms, and absolutely they can be done very quickly and therefore there may well be the need for the chief commissioner to have powers to reclassify particular firearms in that respect. But they need to be carefully utilised, and we need to ensure that facts are at hand and that law-abiding firearms owners are not unfairly penalised.

Similarly, I understand the thinking behind the national AusCheck system being introduced, but we are concerned. We have heard from many of our firearms groups, including the Australian Deer

Association, Field & Game Australia and the Sporting Shooters Association, who we have consulted with on this bill. There are some that are concerned about what this new AusCheck system will mean, particularly for cost. I think it is one of those things – you want to say that the law-abiding firearms owners should not be impacted. Unfortunately, you just cannot pick out who the terrorists and bad guys are; you actually need to do these checks for everyone. That should be obvious. But I am concerned about what the cost may well be for the AusCheck system. When we asked the government in the bill briefing, they could not tell us, because they said the AusCheck system for firearms licences or firearms checks is not yet finalised and is still probably some time away. Indeed it might be a couple of years away. We have heard figures of over $500 to get an AusCheck done. When you add to that the cost of a licence renewal or a licence application, plus the cost of police checks and any other administrative fees that go with them, you could be looking at fees of over $1000 simply to get a firearms licence. There are those who are concerned – and I share their concern – that this could be a backdoor way of making it so expensive for people to get access to a firearms licence that it is prohibitive. I did not actually hear the member for Berwick's contribution, but we are reserving our right in the other place to look at amendments to this sort of thing, because it is very difficult I think to be legislating for a system when it is not yet known what the process or the costs will be. Again, we want to make sure that we protect law-abiding firearms owners so that they can go about their business in the right way.

There is concern from some in the community about the citizenship requirement. There are clearly law-abiding permanent residents. I do not think it is a massive issue, if you want the privilege of being able to access a firearm, that you should actually be a citizen of this country; it should be perhaps one of the advantages of citizenship. In that respect there is a sensible carve-out if you are a permanent resident but not a citizen and you need a firearm for your employment, whether you are a hunter, whether you are in pest reduction, whatever it might be. There is a carve-out for that, and I think that is appropriate. Again, I welcome that.

They are some of the issues that are addressed. I think certainly the attempts by this bill and through the Ken Lay review to ensure that we are cracking down on criminals is the appropriate way to go about it. That is what we should be doing – making efforts to ensure that criminals are feeling the full force of the law when it comes to trafficking of firearms, the misuse of firearms and stopping firearms getting into the hands of bikies and organised crime, for example. They are the things that should be the focus – and obviously terrorists as well. That is what should be the focus, because the reality is one firearm in the hands of a terrorist or a criminal is one too many. A hundred firearms in the hands of a law-abiding citizen are not a problem. We have seen that it is generally not a problem. I think it is important that we acknowledge that and that the government has acknowledged that by not implementing the suggestion of a cap, which I think, as I said earlier, would literally be pointless and would have done nothing to stop the Bondi event or any other prospective event.

The Nationals are continuing to consult our communities. We have been doing multiple firearms forums around the state. I have been to ones in Ballarat, Bendigo and Morwell, and our senator Bridget McKenzie is doing them consistently around the state as well. We will continue to back law-abiding firearms owners and make sure that legislation like this is focused on cracking down on terrorists and criminals.

John LISTER (Werribee) (15:21): I rise this afternoon to speak on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026. As a few of the speakers have already foreshadowed, the reason why we are here is very much around what happened in that abhorrent attack at Bondi Beach in December last year that took the lives of 15 innocent people. Particularly in the aftermath, our response really needed to be strong and show that we want to make sure that people who have access to firearms are responsible people – and I have to say the vast, vast majority of people who have access to firearms are very responsible people, and I will get to why in just a moment – but also to make sure that we restrict the ability for weapons to be in the hands of people who are going to do the wrong thing, which goes to the firearm prohibition orders in this bill as well.

When we first announced the Ken Lay review post the national cabinet process, I made very sure to approach my local clubs that use guns, particularly the Werribee Rifle Club. We have a strong sporting shooting tradition in Werribee, particularly up the top of Ballan Road at the international sporting shooters complex. We have had an Olympic sport shooter from Werribee in fact. So it was particularly important for me to engage with them very early on to assure them that the government's focus was not about being punitive towards responsible firearms owners but making sure that the laws we had were appropriate and we were responding to changing circumstances in our community as well.

I also had many residents who emailed me. Of course a lot of them were coming out saying, 'Labor's no friend of shooters.' I understand there have been times in the past when we have come down quite hard on this side on restrictions around gun ownership, and it can be difficult. It is not an easy thing to own or use a gun in Victoria, nor should it be. But those residents were quite reasonable and came up with a lot of good points, particularly around some of the things that the Lay report recommended that the government has chosen not to include in this legislation around the idea of limits on the number of firearms a licensed firearms owner can possess.

I want to reflect on this for just one moment. I think one of the issues when we start talking about limits on firearms and classifications of different firearms that people have is that we start to get into some really difficult territory, because they are used for a wide variety of reasons by people, legitimately, who have gone through the licensing process as well. To start putting a number on it became way too much of a strange academic exercise. I had these people emailing me back and forth. Is it five, is it four, is it six or is it eight? We know in principle that having fewer firearms in the community does reduce the risk of firearms getting into the hands of the wrong people, either through theft or them getting lost or not being tracked. I know that is extremely rare, but it does still happen. Particularly in my previous life working for the Minister for Police that was something that we were looking into quite closely through the firearms section at Victoria Police: how we keep that tracking up to date and modern, how we make sure that security is something that is monitored with firearms owners and how they are storing their guns, and resourcing those sections of Victoria Police as well. I think we start getting into that academic exercise of just how many is too many, but what is more important is ensuring we have a framework, and a strong firearms framework, that outlines what responsible ownership looks like, what storage should be and how they should be used, and not necessarily getting into numbers.

As I have said, the vast majority of gun owners do the right thing. This bill is about targeting those who seek to do harm in our community with a firearm, especially with the provisions that we are putting in around firearms prohibition orders. We have a long and proud history of introducing strong and sensible gun laws in this government, from as early as 2018. I remember when these were going through. I was a parliamentary adviser at the time for the minister when we were bringing through firearm prohibition orders. They have been so successful in giving Victoria Police a very, very dynamic tool to be able to target and crack down on organised crime. I remember when we brought them in there was a little bit of commentary in the media from sources close to organised crime who said, 'We are now all cooked,' which was an interesting expression and well ahead of the times in 2018. FPOs give police a wide range of powers to be able to monitor and search and make sure that people who should not have firearms do not have firearms.

We have not left it there over time. We also had some storage changes in 2021 which enhanced the different storage requirements for those category A and B firearms. In 2024 we went forward with more amendments to FPO services. That was particularly in the way that police had to serve those different warrants that they had to be able to enter a premises to serve that FPO. We also in 2024 reduced the magazine capacity for bolt action shotguns, which are very hectic firearms – reasonable in some cases for different uses, but they do look pretty hectic. We also and in particular responded to increasing concerns around digital blueprints for the manufacture of 3D-printed firearms. There are some particularly scary documentaries from the States about how those are being used in the commission of different crimes.

This bill goes to further strengthen firearms prohibition orders, including removing the sunset provisions. We passed these laws in 2018. We are coming close to 2028. This will make the FPO scheme permanent in Victorian law. This is important, because since 2018 we have issued 2767 FPOs and laid nearly 2000 charges relating to breaches of FPOs. In fact last year 235 FPOs were served by Victoria Police, and they are an extremely important tool in fighting organised crime, particularly in the circumstances that we see currently with organised crime. The other thing that we do with our FPO changes is increase the maximum penalties for people who acquire, possess, carry or use a firearm or a firearm-related item in contravention of an FPO, making sure that it is clear to those who have one issued against them that any kind of grey area is not there and they will be held to account for breaching that order.

I do just want to briefly turn to the idea of the citizenship requirements, like those introduced across the entire country, restricting Victorian firearms licences to Australian and New Zealand citizens who are permanent residents of Australia and to non-citizens who need a firearm for work. This is a particularly important part, a little carve-out there. I acknowledge some of the concerns of the Nationals around that. It is an important tool in the country. I know that for my family up in Mildura and out in the Western District they are things that are on the farm, and they do have people who work for them who are from overseas, as part of different schemes that we have in agriculture, who may need to use those firearms at work. It also ensures that we have that background information supplied from other jurisdictions as part of that licensing process, to make sure that whatever place the people have come from – interstate or sometimes overseas – we have all of that information to be able to complete those background checks.

Something else that we do with these reforms is strengthening those background checks. We do acknowledge that the majority of firearms owners are very responsible people, and they have to be when they are handling things like firearms. One of the statistics I have to use, unfortunately, is game licences. We do not publish postcode-to-postcode figures for guns, which is very reasonable. Victoria Police do not want people knowing where they can start going to break into people's houses and steal them. But what I do have is that we have over 500 game licences in Wyndham, which is a pretty good indication that we have a lot of people who use guns. It is important that we have good background checks, because when you have so many people, there will be people out there that should not possess those firearms, and we need to make sure that we can keep up with that. We are also introducing harsher penalties and expanding the Chief Commissioner of Police's powers to temporarily reclassify firearms to give the chief commissioner the power they need to keep our community safe. On that, I commend this bill to the house.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:31): We must do everything we can to get guns out of the hands of the wrong people, and that is why I support a number of these changes that have been proposed today. These are changes that are being made as a result of the Bondi terrorist attack on 14 December – the worst terrorist attack that we have seen on Australian soil, an attack that changed our lives as we know them and that changed the way we all go about our lives each and every day. I can certainly say in my electorate of Caulfield it has had an effect on many of my constituents, to the point where some have even questioned the safety of being here in this country and have increased their security tenfold.

The vast majority of gun owners do the right thing, and this bill is not about them. It is about criminals, it is about organised crime and it is about extremists, and we have got to do everything we can to take guns out of the hands of extremists. We know what happened in Bondi was not just about the guns. It was about an evil indoctrination of a father and a son to attack a group of people simply because of their background and simply because of their religion. It was at a time which was a very joyous celebration, Hanukkah, on a public beach – a community celebration that invited not just Jews but all Australians together. The wonderful thing about Australia is we have always celebrated people's backgrounds and their faiths and their cultures in such a beautiful way. That was taken away from us, hopefully temporarily, in that Bondi attack, and that is why we owe it to governments, both at the

federal and the state levels, to do everything we can to keep people safe and to ensure we get guns out of the hands of these criminals and extremists but also do whatever we can to ensure that that kind of hate has no place at all in our state.

A number of these changes are about ensuring that those that should not be carrying guns are not carrying guns. We have had contributions from many of the government today talking about firearm prohibition orders, or FPOs. As a former Shadow Minister for Police, I know that has been a tool that police have used over a number of years, albeit it has had lots of holes in it, which the government has tried to plug over the years. We have had many situations where bikies have been licensed and carrying guns, and many would ask how with criminal records they have still been able to have a gun. A lot of that is being ironed out now, but certainly over the years there were huge gaps that we raised, particularly where outlaw motorcycle gangs were carrying weapons.

It is really important to add that Bondi happened in Sydney but we have had our fair share of problems here in Melbourne. When, on 6 December 2024, we saw the firebombing of Adass, that was a very important turning point for us here in Victoria, because it was linked to a terrorist attack, once again, on Australian soil. It was linked to the Iranian Islamic regime, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. It led also to the extradition of and closure of the diplomatic offices and the consul and ambassador of Iran. All of that followed further reports and investigations by ASIO. It is important to point that out. What is further important to point out is that many of those people that are linked to the Adass firebombing have also been connected to many of the tobacco firebombings that we are all seeing across this state.

We have an absolute crime capital right in the heartland of Melbourne. It is gangland city here in Melbourne. There are guns, there are bikies and there are terrorists that have been linked to all of this as well. That is why we must do everything we possibly can to stamp this out. This is tip-of-the-iceberg stuff. Certainly we have got to get the weapons out of these individuals' hands. But do you think these licensing changes alone are going to stop that? No, because many of these individuals that seek to attack in the way that they do will find ways to get weapons; they will find ways to make their attacks. That is not to say we do not have an obligation here to do better, and that is why I support the changes that have been put in front of us. But we must also ensure that both ASIO and Victoria Police are properly funded and that we have the laws necessary to deal with those individuals that are responsible for these attacks.

It has taken a long time to deal with those responsible for the Adass firebombing, and there is still a fair way to go. There is a lot still to be done in terms of the tobacco stores that we have seen, in terms of holding those individuals to account. The fact is that a lot of this can be done and directed on remote from Iran and Iraq, where you have got foreign actors that are actually pulling the trigger here in Melbourne. How is that possible, how is that allowable and how is it that Melbourne is the capital when it comes to these types of organised crime? It is not just tobacco stores, but now it is pubs and clubs and restaurants that have all been connected to these types of threats, intimidation, violence and straight-out gangland attacks. All of that needs to change. For all of that we need better laws.

I like some of the elements of this in terms of the signal, which suggests that it is citizens that should be afforded the ability to own a licence. It is an important signal. Obviously there are carve-outs for those non-citizens if they need them for work purposes or other things. But I think we do need to have that signal to say that we have a very, very strong law in this country to deal with this kind of thing. We cannot be lax when it comes to safety. We have got to be strong. We have got to show strength. We have got to have consequences. We have seen the ISIS brides, and I know a lot of this is international and federal in terms of the links to this, but all of that coming to Victoria, coming to Australia. These individuals that have been over in the Middle East, doing what they have been doing and bringing that stuff here into our state: we cannot have that. We absolutely cannot have that. There should be absolutely no place for extremists whatsoever, and we need very, very strong immigration laws when it comes to that. I have been on record as probably the biggest supporter for immigration.

I love immigration, but I have a real issue when we have extremists and those extremists are allowed back into this state. I think that it is really important to make that differentiation. This is important.

It is important that the Chief Commissioner of Police has ultimate powers here when it comes to some of the changes as well. It is important that AusCheck are involved as well in terms of security checks. When I have spoken to Victoria Police, they have told me how many individuals have been on watchlists but have still got firearms. I really hope that these laws will deal with a lot of that as well. I understand that when people are on watchlists it potentially means they do not want to disclose to the individual that they are on a watchlist, but, again, we need to ensure that safety is paramount here. We have got to do what we can to ensure the safety of all Victorians, no matter who they are or their background. When people do not feel safe in this state, the government has failed them. That has happened over the last few years. It certainly happened with the Adass firebombing. It certainly happened again with the Bondi attack, and we have seen it even in more recent times with attacks on other individuals and buildings and facilities and even in the ongoing hijacking of our city in those weekly protests that we have had as well. We have got to stop all of that. We have got to have laws, we have got to have consequences, we have got to have more police and we have got to ensure that all of this works. It is the one thing that the government needs to absolutely get right. If people do not feel safe, then the rest of it unfortunately falls second and third, because if they cannot leave their home or they are scared even in their own home, which many people are in this state, then the government has failed them.

I am certainly happy that the government is moving this forward. Again, we have just come off a royal commission. The federal government was dragged kicking and screaming to that royal commission, and that is very interesting. I hope that Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion delivers the results that it has promised, but we must do everything we possibly can to keep all Victorians safe.

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (15:41): I also rise to speak on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026. As previous speakers have mentioned and as we all know, these legislative changes that we are debating really came out of the tragic Bondi Beach massacre, a mass shooting that targeted a Jewish Hanukkah celebration and of course a horrific event that shocked the nation and demanded action from government at both the federal level and the state level. We know that governments have a duty and an obligation to review, to investigate and to act to prevent such heinous crimes happening and to learn from these things so they do not happen again. For this legislation that we are talking about today, immediately or very urgently, the state Labor government did what they called a rapid review of gun laws in Victoria. There was also, immediately following this terrible massacre, a calling together of the national cabinet to talk about what action was going to be taken and how to respond. The combination of both that rapid review of firearm legislation that was undertaken in Victoria and measures that came out of the discussions at the national level through the national cabinet is what we are talking about today – the result of those two forums to bring about legislation to make our state even safer and to ensure that we review and make sure that firearm legislation protects people, so we keep guns out of the hands of criminals that commit crimes and want to harm people with guns, but also balance that with a process and a framework that ensures that there are still guns for those legitimate gun owners that need those guns for either their work or perhaps their livelihoods in regional areas for farming and doing things such as getting rid of feral animals on properties and that need to use them in the course of their work or livelihood. It is hoped that this legislation continues to build on the reform that the Labor government has made to firearms over time. This continues to build on that legislation to make it even safer for all of us, as well as ensuring that those that need to have gun licences and have firearms can continue to do so as well, within very strict guidelines and very strict licensing procedures.

Going to some of the legislative changes that this bill is looking to implement, something that has been debated quite a bit and quite a lot has been made of is the fact that at least one of the shooters in the terrible Bondi tragedy was not a citizen of Australia and how you can own guns without being a citizen.

This legislation that we are debating today does change that so that it is citizens or New Zealand permanent residents that are able to have licences for guns. Of course there will be those that are not citizens. I know even in the electorate of Thomastown there are people that have been here many, many years that have not really needed to or thought it was necessary to become citizens. But of course if they do have guns, this will mean that they will need to take steps to ensure that they do fit within the legislation.

Another one of the changes to be made through this legislation is of course the introduction of the Commonwealth firearms background checks and a requirement for firearms licensing that will leverage ASIO and the Australian Crime Intelligence Commission with national intelligence information. Again, one of the criticisms following the Bondi attacks was that the different intelligence agencies may not have been communicating or talking or sharing information, in a way. Sometimes that is because the legislation does not allow the sharing of information. But this was a criticism, and this legislation is about ensuring that there is the ability for the different intelligence agencies to share information to ensure that there are no gaps and there are no holes when it comes to individuals who apply for or have firearms and to ensure that the licences are very thoroughly checked and the person who is applying for the licence is thoroughly checked and does not slip through any legislative gaps. This is about ensuring that it is a holistic framework.

The legislation also repeals the Firearms Act 1996 provisions that would otherwise cause all of the provisions related to firearms prohibition orders to sunset on 8 May. Again, Victoria passed legislation around firearm prohibition orders, and this was a provision that police had requested to assist them, particularly when it came to illegal firearms and organised crime. This made it easier for them to undertake surveillance work and also to ensure that they had the necessary powers in order to intercept and of course arrest those that were carrying illegal firearms or in fact trafficking illegal firearms. Originally those provisions were to sunset on 8 May 2028, but this legislation now builds those provisions into the legislation ongoing, without having that sunset provision.

There is also an increase in penalties. Penalties have gone to a higher level to ensure that firearm offences are actually punished at a much higher level, to really show the seriousness of those offences and to make it an even stronger offence at a greater penalty for those that commit such crimes.

The bill also creates greater flexibility for the Chief Commissioner of Police to temporarily recategorise a firearm or type of firearm to expand regulation-making powers to better enable the police to respond to an emerging firearm technology of concern. I think we have talked about this a lot in the chamber, where legislation often has to be updated. It is sort of a living thing. It has to adapt and change to the way the community is changing, whether it is in their attitudes and values or whether it is to do with technology or the way that things are done. Legislation always has to keep up with those changes, and this is another example of legislation being used for that purpose.

When it comes to gun legislation and guns, there have always been many different points of view from many different people within our community. There are those that say we should never have any guns, and of course there are those that say there should be no restriction on guns with this sort of crazy idea that it is not the gun, it is the person. But I think this legislation makes practical changes that try to accommodate all the views within Victoria and ensure that those that have lawful reasons for guns are able to go about their business. And for those that believe that we need the toughest of protections, it is also looking at that.

I have to give a shout-out. There are a number of constituents of the Thomastown electorate that do recreational hunting, and they also are members of a number of gun clubs. The Metropolitan Clay Target Club was in fact based in Epping for many, many years until that private land was – I think the developer evicted the club. Even though we tried very, very hard to find more land within the City of Whittlesea in order for them to relocate, it became very difficult because of the different aspects of the land, the requirements of the land and the amount of land in the outer suburbs, where of course it is also very expensive, as the subdivisions are rapidly happening to split up land for the purpose of

residential housing. I think now a lot of them are in Werribee at the gun club over there, so it is good that they can continue to do this recreational sport. I think this legislation will continue to make us safer and ensure that firearms are not – *(Time expired)*

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (15:51): I am pleased to have the opportunity today to speak on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026 before us and recognise that the context of this bill is the dreadful and alarming Bondi terrorist attack, which I will talk about in a moment. Perhaps without that attack some of these reforms would not be being made today. In that instance the wrong people had the guns. They were in the wrong hands, and they had an evil motive. But the changes that are being made today are largely informed by the independent review conducted by the former Victorian chief of police Ken Lay. When he did his review there were 16 recommendations made and one was not adopted, the cap on guns. I was very pleased to see that that was not adopted, because there was a lot of discussion about that, certainly in my electorate, where there are many people that have multiple guns. I will touch again on that a bit later. The reforms that we have before us are around firearms licensing and the regulatory framework.

I want to start, though, with the Bondi terrorist attack which happened on 14 December, targeting Jewish Australians who were down on the beach and in the parks celebrating Hanukkah. The way that this attack went about, we were all able to see dreadful footage of what happened. I do not know if that is a good or a bad thing about it – we all have mobile phones with videos on them – but we were all able to see some of the dreadful, dreadful things that happened as well as some of the heroics. We had 15 people killed there. There were a 10-year-old girl, an Israeli citizen, a French national and an 87-year-old Holocaust survivor who had already seen plenty in his life, and about 40 were injured. We know the gunmen were father and son, and it was officially declared an act of antisemitic terrorism. As we know, the gunmen were shot at the scene. The father was killed and the son critically injured and then detained.

Following that, the Prime Minister initiated the federal Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, and I really hope that that royal commission that is underway today – and we see a lot of things that are in the media – makes a difference to antisemitism and those in the Jewish community. I have many friends in the Jewish community and I have worked extensively in and with that community too. I see the fear in a number of people living in Melbourne. Friends of mine said that they had started to learn Hebrew in case they had to relocate to Israel, because they thought that was perhaps a safer place than being in Melbourne, and this was particularly frightening for me.

More locally there has been a lot of concern and alarm in my electorate. I have been contacted by a number of residents in the Nillumbik part of my electorate who were alarmed to hear that a number of white supremacists have shifted in over several locations. The people I know and know well, and those I do not know, all shared concerns and their fears with me about this group. Their fears were about what they might bring to the area and how they may infiltrate local groups and organisations with the intent of spreading hate. There is no place for neo-Nazism, racism or organised hate in our communities, and these ideologies are fundamentally opposed to the values of respect, inclusion and democracy that underpin our society. I encourage anybody in the Nillumbik area to be alert, perhaps not alarmed, and watch closely. I am sure and have trust that the police are also monitoring the situation and watching it carefully.

The bill, though, is around keeping firearms in the hands of the legitimate users and restricting them from getting into the wrong hands. In an area like mine, which has mountains and lots of forest but a lot of farmland, guns are very common. I myself own a firearm and have a category A and B longarm licence. I cannot take out a deer with that, but on the farm it can do a number of other things. We only have only the one gun stored very securely. But if I was to be a hunter, which many people in my electorate are because it makes such a difference to the communities – whether you are in Woods Point or in the High Country out of Mansfield or Jamieson, hunting is such an important recreation. We have an explosion in deer numbers and are trying to keep them in control. It is going to take a lot more of that. I have gun clubs everywhere. I have a small-bore gun club at West Warburton. I have shot at

the rifle range in Wesburn and clay target at the Melbourne Gun Club, which is in the electorate of Evelyn just down the road. I have shot a pistol at Mansfield, and I have been to many of the other organisations where people shoot recreationally.

We know that at the Olympics pistol events, rifles and shotguns are legitimate. We have biathlons where people in the Winter Olympics are skiing and then they need to shoot. And as I have mentioned, farmers like ourselves rely on guns for pests and vermin. People may also have fairly historical guns, as many people had after the First World War. I think they issued rifles to a number of people, farmers in the area, so it is not unusual for a lot of people to have inherited probably 100-year-old rifles that were distributed some time ago. And we do store them very securely.

I remember one time quite a number of years ago, I borrowed one of Dad's farm vehicles, his Holden Rodeo, to shift some furniture well before I was a member of Parliament. We were grabbing something from behind the seat and lo and behold there was one of Dad's shotguns sitting in the gap. As we were in Melbourne, I was thinking, 'I'm not sure I'm really supposed to have that with me at the moment.' Such were the times that they were part of just doing business.

One of the things I want to touch on, because at the bill briefing this got a little bit of airtime, is about the planned introduction of AusCheck. The bill briefing was very, very well attended by members of the coalition, because this is something that is really important to us. The Commonwealth are embarking on this national background checking system, and that is all good. A more consistent approach to firearms licensing across jurisdictions – that is all good. So while this objective of a nationally coordinated system is broadly supported, concerns remain regarding the timing of its legislative inclusion. It is still under development, and key details regarding its operation have not been settled. We raised the cost, and it was really unknown. Was it $500 or $750? This was something of concern to many people. Advice that we were given indicates the system may take several years to be fully developed and become operational. As I said, the cost has not been disclosed. Additionally, under this framework adverse information identified through AusCheck could result in licence refusal, suspension or cancellation, and advice provided indicated that where a licence is revoked, firearms would be subject to confiscation by Victoria Police. So there are a few things that we really need to have worked out here, and these are things that we hope can get resolved but maybe we will not get resolved because this relies on answers coming back federally.

Throughout the bill briefing many of us spoke with people who are indeed sporting shooters. I know the shadow minister spoke with the Sporting Shooters Association; Field & Game; the ADA, the Australian Deer Association – I have had quite a lot to do with them; the Victorian Amateur Pistol Association; the Hound Hunters – I have had a lot to do with them as well; and the Gippsland Deer Stalkers Association. These are legitimate gun users, firearms users. We need to make sure, though, that everybody who does hold a licence remains capable of doing so, and if things change, if their circumstances change, the system needs to be flexible to be able to perhaps remove firearms. In family violence situations, I have had people come to me who have been victims of violence and they are worried that the perpetrators have had guns and still have guns. One time they were being confiscated from one person and he put them in the name of his new partner. I think there is still a little bit more tightening up to go. If this bill restricts the use of firearms by the wrong people, I will be very pleased with that. At the same time, I was pleased to see that there were no caps on the number of firearms, because people in my electorate were very exercised, as was I, about that being a possibility.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (16:01): I rise today to support the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026, and I do so as the member for Pascoe Vale, as the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Safety, but also as the newly appointed chair by the Minister for Police of the Victorian Firearms Consultative Committee, a role that I am honoured to undertake in partnership with Victoria Police, the Department of Justice and Community Safety and representatives from right across Victoria's firearms industry and community safety sector as well.

Before turning to the detail of this legislation, I believe it is important to begin with a principle that should unite every member of this house: this debate is not about choosing between responsible firearm ownership and community safety, it is about recognising that the two go hand in hand. Across Victoria there are hundreds of thousands of licensed firearm owners. They include primary producers protecting livestock, farmers managing pests, recreational hunters undertaking legitimate conservation activities, sporting shooters representing their clubs, security professionals performing important work and many other Victorians who comply every day with some of the most rigorous firearm laws anywhere in the world. The overwhelming majority are exactly what we would hope them to be: responsible, conscientious and law-abiding members of our community. They understand that a firearm licence is not an automatic right – it is a privilege, a privilege that carries significant responsibilities: responsibilities to store firearms securely, responsibilities to comply with strict licensing requirements, responsibilities to undertake training and responsibilities to ensure that firearms never fall into the wrong hands. At the same time, those same responsible licence-holders understand something equally important. They understand that if even one firearm falls into the hands of a violent criminal, an organised crime syndicate, a terrorist or someone intent on causing serious harm, the consequences can be catastrophic. That is why responsible firearm ownership and strong firearm regulation are not competing ideas. They reinforce one another.

Australia learned that lesson in the most heartbreaking way imaginable, as many of us know. On 28 April 1996 our nation witnessed one of the darkest days in its history: 35 innocent people lost their lives at Port Arthur in Tasmania. Twenty-three more were seriously injured. Families were torn apart. Communities across the entire nation were left traumatised. An entire nation struggled to comprehend how much unimaginable violence could occur. Many Australian people still remember where they were when they heard the news. I myself vividly recall learning of that news as a grade 6 student at Coburg West Primary School at the time. The case that particularly struck me, or the loss of life, was with respect to young Madeline, who was three years old, Alannah, six years old, and their mother as well, who was 36 years old. And I acknowledge the father, Walter, who has committed to remain a strong advocate for gun law reform in this country. I also want to acknowledge the loss of life of Merv and Mary Howard from Dunnstown in Ballarat, where my wife grew up and knew the family and where there is a memorial still at the church that we frequent, opposite the Shamrock pub, when we go up there to visit.

Port Arthur became more than a national tragedy; it became a defining moment in Australian public policy. In the days and weeks that followed governments of every political persuasion came together around a simple but profound principle: that the possession of a firearm in Australia must always be conditional upon the protection of public safety. I commend former Liberal Prime Minister John Howard for his leadership in reforming this space. The National Firearms Agreement fundamentally reshaped Australia's approach to firearm regulation. Victoria, alongside every other jurisdiction, implemented sweeping reforms. Again, I acknowledge the then Liberal government during the 1990s of Jeff Kennett for doing their bit during that time. Those reforms introduced nationally consistent licensing, registration of firearms, the requirement of a genuine reason to possess a firearm, strict safe storage obligations, restrictions on higher risk firearms, comprehensive background checks and strengthened police powers. Those reforms have helped make Australia one of the safest countries in the world when it comes to firearm violence. They remain one of the finest examples of governments putting politics aside in pursuit of community safety. I commend the opposition also for not opposing this bill today.

But good legislation is never frozen in time. The world changes, technology changes, criminals change, organised crime changes and terrorism changes, and our laws must evolve with them. The need for that vigilance was brought into sharp focus once again by the horrific antisemitic terrorist attack at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025. Fifteen innocent people lost their lives. Dozens more were injured. Families had their futures stolen from them. Australia's Jewish community experienced profound grief, fear and trauma. Like every act of terrorism, the attack sought to not only take lives but also undermine the values that define our nation: multiculturalism, social cohesion and the belief

that people should be able to live safely regardless of their faith, culture or background. There is no place in Australia for antisemitism. There is no place for violent extremism. There is no place for hate-fuelled violence. Following the horrific attack, national cabinet acted swiftly. Every Australian jurisdiction recognised that firearm regulation, like organised crime and terrorism, cannot stop at state borders. Information must be shared, intelligence must be shared and governments must continue working together.

Here in Victoria, the Victorian Labor government acted immediately by asking former Victorian police commissioner Ken Lay to undertake a comprehensive rapid review of Victoria's firearms laws. I think it is worth pausing to recognise the significance of that decision. Ken Lay of course is one of Victoria's most respected policing and community safety leaders, and his review was not undertaken behind closed doors; it was one of the most comprehensive consultations on firearms undertaken in the state in many years. More than 19,000 Victorians participated through surveys, more than 500 written submissions were received and 40 consultation sessions were held across metropolitan and regional Victoria. Importantly, those consultations included Victoria Police, farmers, hunters, sporting shooters, firearm dealers, academics, family violence and community safety specialists, firearm safety advocates and of course members of the Victorian Firearm Consultative Committee itself. What emerged from that consultation was something that I think every member of this house really should reflect on. It is an excellent report. I would encourage everyone to really go through it because there were some strong views from every perspective. Some participants argued that Australia should continue tightening access to firearms wherever possible because the consequences of misuse are simply too great. Others argued with equal conviction that responsible, law-abiding firearm owners should not be burdened with unnecessary regulation when they have demonstrated for many years that they comply with the law and use their firearms safely and responsibly. Those perspectives of course were different, but sometimes they were strongly different. But what struck me about the review was that for the chair of the committee, looking at all that information coming through, both perspectives ultimately began from the same principle. Both wanted safer communities, both wanted firearms kept out of the hands of criminals and both wanted the confidence of Victoria's firearm licensing system. The question was not whether community safety mattered, the question was how best to strengthen it.

That is precisely what this bill seeks to do. The Victorian Labor government of course carefully considered those findings put forward by Ken Lay. Following extensive consultation and careful analysis the government accepted 15 of the 16 review recommendations, recognising that Victoria already has one of the strongest firearm regulatory systems in Australia but also acknowledging that strong systems must continue to evolve to respond to modern threats. This bill is the legislative expression of that commitment. It strengthens the integrity of Victoria's firearm licensing framework, it strengthens the powers available to Victoria Police, it strengthens national intelligence sharing, it strengthens our response to organised crime and ultimately it strengthens community safety. Importantly, it does all of this while continuing to recognise the legitimate and lawful use of firearms by responsible members of our community. That balance is fundamental, because this legislation is not about making life harder for those who already comply with the law; it is about making life significantly harder for those who seek to break it.

The first major change – noting the time, with 2 minutes to go, I will go through some of the main changes here – relates to eligibility matters and who should be eligible to hold a firearms licence. This bill introduces a citizenship requirement for most firearm licence holders while also providing exemptions where a firearm is reasonably required for a person's livelihood and allowing additional exemptions to be prescribed through regulations where appropriate. On better intelligence, the bill introduces Commonwealth AusCheck background checks into Victoria's firearm licensing system, drawing upon national intelligence held by agencies such as ASIO and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission. Importantly, those checks are not limited to the point at which someone first applies for a licence. If new intelligence emerges suggesting someone has become involved in organised crime, violent extremism or other serious criminality, further checks can occur outside of the ordinary licensing renewal cycle. This is a major, major reform that is still going to take quite a bit

of work to implement at the national and state levels once this bill passes. Keeping pace with technology, this bill expands the Chief Commissioner of Police's ability to temporarily reclassify firearms while proper technical assessments and broader consultations occur. That relates really to 3D printers and the role they are playing and the risks they potentially bring in new and evolving and emerging weapons and firearms being manufactured in the community as well.

On firearm prohibition orders, the bill also significantly strengthens penalties for those who knowingly breach these orders or supply firearms to prohibited persons. This bill also tackles firearm trafficking by introducing graduated trafficking offences with significantly increased penalties for large-scale firearm trafficking.

I acknowledge as well that the one recommendation that was not implemented was in relation to firearm caps. I could talk at length about that, but essentially the review did not find any evidence in relation to that making a difference to community safety, because the reality is all it takes is one firearm falling into the hands of one extremist, dangerous, criminal person to cause tremendous damage to our community. In that respect, I commend the bill to the chamber.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (16:11): I also rise to speak on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026. As others have mentioned, the bill comes after a rapid review by former police commissioner Ken Lay into Victoria's gun laws. I was fortunate to have an interview with Commissioner Lay to provide our feedback into how we thought the gun laws should change in this state. This of course came after the absolutely horrific attack at Bondi Beach, where 15 adults and children were murdered as they were celebrating their faith on a public beach, which was just absolutely horrific. As others have mentioned, it contains reforms that they say improve Victoria's gun laws, including making the firearm prohibition order scheme permanent, national background checks through AusCheck and graduated offences for firearms trafficking.

But I actually think what is most important about this bill is what it totally leaves out. I find it a little bit galling to sit here and listen to Labor members opposite talk about this bill as if it is showing some kind of leadership on the issue of gun law reform, when the reality is, if you actually look at what is in this bill, the Labor government has totally caved in to the gun lobby and the hunting and shooting lobby and ruled out the very first recommendation of Ken Lay's report, which was to cap the number of guns that people can own. The Victorian Labor government has also refused to participate in the gun buyback scheme that the Prime Minister announced straight after the Bondi massacre, putting the whole scheme at risk of collapsing entirely or not working, as was detailed in a recent investigative piece, which is very much worth a read, by Bevan Shields, a journalist at the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

I cannot for the life of me describe it as anything other than just a staggering lack of leadership from the Victorian Labor government, because Australians have been through this before and Australians know what leadership should look like after a massacre when it comes to gun law reform. In 1996, after the Port Arthur massacre killed 35 people, a Liberal Prime Minister, John Howard, announced a national gun buyback, and he stood up to the gun lobby and to the hunters and the shooters, many in his own Liberal and National electorates, because it was the right thing to do. Then in 2019, when 50 people were shot and killed in a massacre at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern did a similar thing: she announced gun laws and a gun buyback, because it was the right thing to do. But then, when it happened here, when two men went on a shooting rampage, not using one gun but using six guns – they were licensed to own an unlimited number of guns; they used six guns to murder 15 mostly Jewish Australians at our most iconic place, Bondi Beach – instead of doing what John Howard did, instead of doing what Jacinda Ardern did and actually introducing strong gun law reform and buybacks, the Victorian Labor's government's response was tepid and delayed and completely lacked the leadership we need. Instead of acting to implement a gun buyback scheme and cap the number of guns that one person can own, Labor instituted a review. They said it would be a rapid review; it ended up being a long review. When that review came back its first recommendation was a cap on the number of guns that one person can own, and Labor took no time

at all in rejecting that recommendation. It was the very first recommendation in that review, and it is the one that the Labor government rejected.

Gun Control Australia points to more than 9000 firearms having been stolen nationally in the last six years – 9000 guns that were licensed to people legally that were then stolen and are now somewhere in the Australian community – and the police have only been able to recover a quarter of them. Its vice-president described Labor's approach as 'cherry-picking the easier recommendations' and 'not good enough', and I concur. Instead, when the member for Richmond got up in this place and asked the Premier why she was not going to put a cap on guns, the words she used were straight out of the National Rifle Association of America's (NRA) playbook. The words she used –

Danny Pearson interjected.

Ellen SANDELL: Member for Essendon, they were. Let us go back and have a look at what she said. Let us just remember we are talking about people being able to own an unlimited number of guns. Is that reasonable? It is not reasonable. When she was asked about that in this chamber, she said that instead we need to only focus on criminals and bad people who own guns. We need to stop guns getting into the hands of criminals and bad people, rather than have caps on the number of guns. But those words are the exact same words, the exact same argument that the NRA use in their propaganda. We know that the NRA is very good at propaganda. We know that they have completely captured the Congress and the Senate and decision-makers in the US, and look at their gun culture, look at what has resulted from that. I am not sure why here in Victoria we have a government that is taking marching orders from the National Rifle Association in the US. They literally say that we should focus on gun criminals and focus on bad people. They say it is about the person, not the gun. We know that that argument has led to the proliferation of firearms across the US and the countless deaths that have resulted.

The gun lobby says that we should not place an undue burden on law-abiding citizens, but the thing is, the evidence actually makes clear that the more guns there are in circulation, even if they are legal guns, the more likely they are to end up in the hands of criminals. This is precisely why we need a cap on the number of guns that can be owned by one person. Let us remember the Bondi murderers used six guns in their attack, and they were all legal guns. If someone can own unlimited guns and they then intend to go and cause harm with those guns, it is going to be easier to cause a significantly larger amount of harm if they have a larger number of firearms. But unfortunately the NRA seems to have found a willing ally in the Victorian Labor government.

Ken Lay's review found that some recreational hunters in Victoria own up to 68 firearms, and some sporting shooters own as many as 288 guns. Ken Lay's review said that there might be some special circumstances where someone needs to own more than the recommended cap. So if the recommended cap is three or six, there might be some sporting shooters who do this for their career, who do this all of the time, or there might be a farmer that for some reason needs more than that cap, and there could be allowances made for that. There could be exceptions made. But does anybody need 68 guns? Does anybody need 288 guns? No. And the contrast between other states and Victoria is instructive. New South Wales has introduced a four-gun general cap. You can have four guns in New South Wales, and 10 as an exception for specified purposes. They have paired that with a maximum two-year licence term and stronger storage and identity requirements. Western Australia has also introduced ownership limits and mandatory health checks. So Victorians are right to ask: why are there now caps in New South Wales and Western Australia? Why does anyone in Victoria need so many more guns than people in New South Wales and Western Australia? Why does anybody need dozens or hundreds of guns, and why is Labor letting them?

Unfortunately, there is a pattern here. It is not the first time that the Labor government has put the gun lobby's or the shooting lobby's or the hunting lobby's interests ahead of community safety and community interests. Over the past three years the Labor government really has bent over backwards for recreational game hunters. First, Labor rejected their own inquiry's recommendations to ban duck

shooting, then Labor opened up tens of thousands of hectares of national parks for recreational hunting and Labor has rejected some commonsense and expert calls to list feral deer as pests. I will talk about the link here to guns. Victoria is the only mainland state in Australia to classify deer as an essentially protected game species. They are not listed as a feral pest when we know the damage they are causing to the environment and to people's lives, but they are listed as a protected game species because game hunters went to Labor and they did not want them to be listed as a protected species. Game hunters want to keep deer populations alive and well so that they can continue to hunt deer well into the future, while those deer are wreaking absolute havoc across our environment, our ecosystems and our farmland. We are seeing deer turn up in Fitzroy or run into people's homes in Abbotsford. We are seeing them turn up on primary school grounds across our towns. And we are then seeing hunters go out to try and shoot them. One of my staff members has family members who have bullet holes on the outside of their kids' bedrooms, embedded in the walls, because deer hunters are just running rampant across the state, trying to shoot deer and ending up shooting into kids' bedrooms.

I think Victorians would be pretty horrified to see Labor – in this heightened environment that we have where we know that social cohesion is fraying, where we know there is an increase in violent rhetoric and where we know that we are seeing politics get more and more divisive – allowing deadly weapons to proliferate. We all have a responsibility to work on the social conditions that reduce violence, but we also surely have a responsibility to reduce the risk of guns being able to be used in this heightened environment. The Greens' position, and I believe this aligns very much with what most Victorians believe, is that owning a gun is an extraordinary privilege; it is not a right. We do not have the same culture of gun ownership that they do in the US. Owning a gun is an extraordinary privilege, and that privilege should never, ever come at the cost of public safety or peace in our community.

The Greens back a cap on gun ownership. Our position is that it should be three. Surely that is more than enough. We will be bringing forward amendments in the upper house to this bill to introduce that cap of three guns for a single person and to also cancel junior licences. The other thing that has disturbed me greatly over the last little while is to see the vigour with which this Victorian government is out there trying to encourage shooting and increase gun usage amongst people as young as 12. There are campaigns out there to say, 'Come and try shooting; 12-year-olds and up, come and get involved.' This is no shade on people who enjoy sport shooting – legitimate sport activity that people enjoy – but should we be going out there and promoting a culture of gun usage and gun ownership amongst children? I do not think that is a responsible thing for a government to be doing, and we believe that most Victorians see no need for children to have access to firearms with junior licences.

I want to end by saying that the government says it has accepted 15 of Mr Lay's 16 recommendations, and it has only rejected the first one. But that is quite misleading when this bill actually only implements four of the 16 in full. Some other recommendations are 'underway' administratively. Some have been sent for further consultation, and we probably know where that is going to end up. And some are merely to be considered at an unspecified future date. So this Labor government has failed to meaningfully act on two-thirds – eight out of the 16 recommendations – of its own review by respected former police commissioner Ken Lay. I have to say that I never thought I would see the day when John Howard had more courage than a Victorian Labor government has, and under the new Premier I hope that we will see this change. There needs to be a change with the new Premier such that he is not so captured by and capitulates to the gun and hunting lobby at the expense of all Victorians' safety, but I have to say, I am not going to hold my breath.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon) (16:28): I am delighted to join the debate on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026, and I am going to pick a bone with the member for Albert Park, because she asked me to swap with her, and I had to listen to that drivel for 20 minutes. One thing I can say about the member for Melbourne: there are four consistencies with every speech.

Ellen Sandell: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, we know that debate is not an opportunity to attack other members of Parliament, and surely this week of all weeks calls for a bit of decorum and respect.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): That is not strictly a point of order from the member for Melbourne, but I ask the member for Essendon to come to the bill before us.

Danny PEARSON: I will do that, but I do want to take up a couple of things that the member for Melbourne said. I have listened to the member for Melbourne for 12 years in this place, and there are four consistencies. She always reads her speeches. She always includes the word 'I' consistently through her speeches. She is consistently anti-Labor, and whenever she has the opportunity to praise the Liberal Party, she does so with quite a level of affection. It is just, I find, deeply offensive. What the member for Melbourne failed to acknowledge were some of the contributions that John Cain made in bringing in what were then the toughest gun laws in this state, in 1987, as a consequence of the Queen Street massacre and the Walsh Street massacre. The reality is that we are in this position now because of the Bondi massacre. Maybe the member for Melbourne had a different upbringing to me. I suspect she probably did. I was raised very clearly to believe in 'never again'. So from my perspective, when I saw the horrendous actions at Bondi and the damage and that social cohesion had frayed and led to this outcome, I absolutely supported the action that has been taken in relation to addressing these issues.

One of the reasons why this bill is so important is that we have seen a level of consistency in terms of failures at a global level when it comes to intelligence gathering. For example, when you look at September 11, the CIA knew that two of the September 11 terrorists had attended an al-Qaeda summit in January 2000 and that they also had US visas. They did not, however, advise the FBI of this until August 2001. By that stage these two gentlemen had been living in San Diego for a year. Similarly, the National Security Agency on 10 September intercepted a communication which said 'Tomorrow is zero hour.' That was not translated until 12 September. And so what came out of September 11 was that, particularly in a federated model, you often have different agencies getting different bits of information but they are not sharing that information. I think that what this bill does in relation to making sure that we have got those AusChecks in place is going to be very important to try and prevent this occurring.

The ridiculous notion from the member for Melbourne, arguing against the government's position in relation to caps: let us just unpick that for a moment. What the member for Melbourne is saying is that you should have no more than three guns per person, right? I would argue there are two factors here. One is the appropriateness of a person to hold a firearms licence, which is what we are dealing with. The second question comes to the volume of firearms in the community. Now, again demonstrating once more that the Greens are the fairies in the bottom of the garden, follow that logic to its conclusion. There are probably 3 million adults in this state. Is the Greens' political position that we should all have three weapons each, and therefore we should have 9 million firearms in this state? It is just baloney. These people are blowhards, they are dilettantes and they never take the issue of legislating and governing this state seriously, which is why they are doomed to irrelevance. I look forward to seeing them end up in the dustbin of history. It is just an absolute joke.

You have got to make sure you have the balance right and come into this place, make an argument, be very clear and follow it through. Are they saying they want 9 million guns in the state of Victoria? Logically, that is what it leads to. If you have a cap, the extension to that is that it is a right. So if I have a right to have three guns, my wife has a right to have three guns, my daughter who is 21 has three guns, my other daughter, who is 19, has three guns and my son, who will next year turn 18, can have three guns, is the Greens political party seriously suggesting we should have a set of circumstances where in my house in Ascot Vale there are 15 firearms? It is just ridiculous. These people are frauds, absolute frauds.

The reason why we are in a slightly different position to a nation like the United States is of course the adoption of the second amendment on 15 December 1791, which says:

> A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

That was a key moment in the history of the United States of America. Clearly Henry Reynolds, who has been an outstanding academic historian, has talked about the frontier wars. I remember reading and studying this at university and talking about the fear when some of the early settlers, particularly in Tasmania, discovered that First Nations people were quite capable of learning how to acquire a weapon, load a weapon and discharge a weapon. They had thought that they were inherently inferior. That led to that level of realisation of, 'Oh, well, these people can actually use firearms'. That caused some level of concern. But leaving that to one side, as a nation, because we were not born as a consequence of a revolution, we have not had that same approach, and I think that is important.

I remember very clearly watching Al Pacino in the film *Revolution*, not one of his well-known works. It was released in 1985. It was playing – those of us of a certain age remember – Sunday night at 8:30. That would be movie night; that would be when you would get the premieres. And I was watching that on 9 August 1987 when they interrupted the bulletin to talk about the Hoddle Street massacre. It was then followed by the Queen Street one, and I think that led to John Cain taking that strong action. But again, with the Greens political party, you never hear about what Labor did. You never hear about the good things Labor did. It is just how terrible we all are, how we are just not a good party, unlike the Greens political party. It is just, I find, deeply offensive, and intellectual laziness seems to be their costume. The only thing they are good at, being dilettante and lazy, is showing yet again. I had hoped that maybe things might change with the passage of time – clearly not.

A bill like this is important because of that information-sharing exercise, and I do think that is important, particularly as we start to use digital technology. That is why I think digital IDs are really important – the ability, for example, if you have got a firearms licence in the future, to have those in a digital format. Again I defer to the Minister for Police on these sorts of questions in terms of what may or may not occur at some point in time in the future. But increasingly having agencies where they can start to cross and share that information so they can have a clear line and clear understanding in relation to the way in which these things can be properly administered I think will be very important.

It is an important bill. It is a good bill. I find the conduct of the member for Melbourne irksome and tiresome, I really do, and it is my earnest hope that she joins me on Main Street in December, because I reckon Davydd Griffiths would do a fantastic job as a Labor member for Melbourne. I commend the bill to the house, and I will be having words with the member for Albert Park when we are done.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (16:37): Can I foreshadow to whoever is following me that I will go short so that the member for Gippsland East and the member for Narracan can have a few minutes on this bill as well. Can I say that I actually enjoyed the member for Essendon's contribution. I had forgotten his great history lessons that we used to get in this place. It is a pity. We are going to miss him, and particularly his view on the Greens. I think we would be in heated agreement about some of the things he has said about the Greens.

I start off by saying I am a licensed shooter. I am a member of the Sporting Shooters Association and Field & Game Australia and have enjoyed shooting all my life. I think it is a great family recreation, and if I go to shoots at the Echuca Gun Club or in Swan Hill, there are multiple generations there. So this business from the Greens about banning junior licences – that is just absurd. I really struggle to say it without swearing. It is just absurd. It is ridiculous. How do you actually teach young people responsible gun ownership and responsible shooting if you do not have junior licences? It is just ridiculous. We have learner drivers for cars because cars are lethal as well. Why can't you actually have a junior licence and learner shooters? I think it is just an absurd proposition. And this business about the proliferation of guns in Victoria – I have never heard anything so stupid in all my life, again. The point that was made by a number of people is it is about the person; it is not about the gun. The people that committed the tragedy of Bondi would have got guns from somewhere if they wanted to have them, no matter what licensing laws were in place. I think that is the point that those that are anti-gun are actually missing about this. You just cannot stop people from getting guns if they desperately want to get one illegally and commit an offence. No matter what we do in this place, that is not going to happen.

But if you think about it, we have just had a change of Premier in Victoria, and comments were made about the Labor Party being captured by the gun lobby. I do not believe that is the case at all. But I think one of the legacies that Premier Allan will leave for this state is she actually stood up for the shooting sector, for the hunting sector, and stood up for duck hunting. Duck hunting is a flashpoint in this place amongst people that have very strong views both ways. I have a very strong view that it should be allowed to happen, and I thank the Premier for actually making sure that happened earlier this year when there was a very strong push to actually stop it. I would hope that Premier Carroll has the same view into the future. People say duck shooting is banned in other states, but there are more ducks shot in New South Wales to control ducks in the rice sector than there are ever shot in Victoria. So to say it is banned in other states is just plain wrong. They are shot under a licence to control vermin.

Let us just be serious about this. Duck hunting is a multigenerational family sport where grandfathers, fathers, sons and daughters go away duck shooting together. It is a family pursuit, and I would like to see it stay that way into the future. I just feel so strongly that people have missed the point about this whole issue about gun licences and gun caps. It is not easy to get a gun licence. You have to go through the test. If you have guns, you actually have to have a gun safe to put them in. So this business about guns being stolen – they are not being stolen from responsible gun owners. I shifted house at one stage. I had not been there very long, and the licensing officer rang up and said, 'I want to come and audit that you have actually installed your gun safe properly.' It happens. They check it. Responsible gun owners do the right thing, and they are checked to make sure they do do the right thing – that their gun safe is actually DynaBolted to a concrete floor so that people cannot steal the gun safe. This business about somehow, because you own guns, you are going to have them all stolen I think is just raw hysteria by people who are anti-gun.

This legislation, as the shadow minister put forward, we are not opposing. I think the government actually got it right when it came to the Lay report, and they have adopted the sensible things out of it and are doing the right thing. The one concern that has been raised, which I will reinforce and also raise, is this business of the AusCheck and what that may cost. The one cynical view I would have, particularly with this government is, yes, they might say you can do it, but they will make sure they tax you very highly or charge you very highly on the way through, which may make it difficult for some people that cannot afford it into the future. I support the idea – the principle – but let us make sure it is not an exorbitant cost and it is not a ramped-up cost because the government want a bit of extra money to go to the bottom line for other things into the future.

The last thing I want to touch on is the issue of deer and about them being a game species. For a private landholder, deer are a pest. They are deemed a pest, and private landholders can shoot them any time of the year on their land. So this business about somehow the government has actually caved in to the hunting lobby to make them a game species for those that want to go and hunt for their trophy deer is just plain wrong. Again, it is scaremongering and nonsense from people who are anti-shooting and anti-guns.

The overwhelming majority of gun owners in Victoria and in Australia are responsible and do the right thing. Why should we all be penalised for a crazy, absolute miniature minority who have done some bloody horrible things with guns and shot people? Like with everything, it is the honest people that suffer, and we do not believe we should be suffering any more than we already have been. I had to hand guns back in the John Howard buyback. I lost a five-shot auto shotgun that was a family gun. They were not extremely dangerous. They are not the high-powered rifles you are talking about. I lost an automatic .22 Ruger. A .22 does not do a lot of harm. If you want to shoot something with a .22, you have got to be pretty close to it. So let us be serious about this. We did not need another gun buyback here in Australia, and fortunately that has not happened. We did not need caps on guns, and fortunately in Victoria that has not happened. Let us just make sure the licence provisions with AusCheck are not made exorbitantly expensive for gun owners. As I said, we do not oppose the legislation.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (16:44): I acknowledge that the abhorrent antisemitic terrorist attack at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025, tragically taking the lives of 15 people, sent a terrible chill through all of us, not least the Jewish community. You hurt one person, you hurt all, and so we all felt that. I am reflecting personally, but I think it is safe to say we all felt that very deeply. It is upon us to do everything we can to keep our state safe, strong, proud and united, and this bill is certainly part of those efforts. It is really about targeting those who seek to do harm in the community with a firearm and also making sure that those who do possess firearms operate them safely, store them safely et cetera.

The Carroll Labor government has a long history in terms of introducing strong and sensible gun laws. At the end of the day they are targeted at keeping guns out of the hands of criminals who are going to use guns inappropriately. Some of the changes that are coming about are really important changes, and the member for Essendon spoke to some of them in terms particularly of information sharing. We know on many levels, whether it is child welfare or otherwise, and certainly in this respect when we are talking about gun controls, the more information sharing, the better. Victorian firearms licences will be restricted to Australian citizens, New Zealand citizens who are permanent residents of Australia and non-citizens who need a firearm for work. This ensures that the background information supplied from other jurisdictions as part of the licensing process, such as criminal record checks, is as reliable and accurate as possible, a really important change. We will also strengthen background checks. I cannot see any reason why anyone would want to go contrary to that. That makes very good sense. Once regulations are introduced by the Commonwealth, if you want a firearms licence you will be required to complete a background check through AusCheck. Again, having a national focus on this really important issue is absolutely vital, because we know that having someone perhaps skip over the border and be able to avert the control or the eyes of the authorities would not be a good idea, particularly if they are going to conduct a criminal act with a gun.

Harsher penalties will be in place for those caught trafficking firearms, with up to 15 years in prison for people possessing bigger numbers of guns. We can see this is a very commonsense approach, a very appropriate approach and certainly one that we back wholeheartedly. The laws will also expand the Chief Commissioner of Police's power to temporarily reclassify guns. This will allow Victoria to respond faster to new technology and emerging threats. I can only imagine the vicissitudes of technological advances into the future. I am certainly not an expert on these, particularly when it comes to guns. I do know we see, on the one hand, young people living in my electorate using 3D printing to print really nice things – little keychains and other things that can be used; medical devices. It could be used in so many positive ways, but of course in the hands of somebody with a malicious intent, we know that very negative outcomes could prevail. Hence it is very important to give our police the powers they need to be able to keep us all safe.

The firearm prohibition order scheme – I remember that coming about – which we introduced in 2018 and which has been wildly successful will also be made permanent in law. This is a very, very good thing. In this year's state budget we invested $38.4 million to upgrade firearms licensing systems so that Victoria is ready for the national firearms register and dangerous weapons stay out of the wrong hands. I note I do live in a metro area, so guns and me, I have to say, not my cup of tea and not a zone I particularly understand very well. I do respect that when you have feral pests such as deer they are destructive to our native flora and fauna and that, with appropriate controls, it makes sense to use a gun and to humanely deal with feral pests. I can see merit in that.

There actually is a gun club in my electorate, I found out recently. They do not shoot animals, but they do shoot targets. They did invite me along. I have not gone along – no disrespect – but I am aware of that as well. I do have to be alive to the different activities that people undertake, but I am absolutely behind very strong gun controls. On that note, I commend the bill to the house.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (16:49): I rise to make a relatively short contribution on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026. I know the member for Narracan wants to speak, so I will simply say that I endorse the member for Murray Plains' comments in relation to the concerns around AusCheck and I

also very strongly endorse his commentary around junior licences, for the very reasons that he articulated so well.

I want to just talk for a few moments on the contribution of the Greens member for Melbourne, who came in here and actually got things wrong. She said that there were six firearms used in the Bondi attack. That is incorrect. There were three firearms used. A fourth was found at the location that was not used. Only three firearms were used. The people had licences for six guns. That was a factually incorrect statement. That damage was caused by three guns. The member for Melbourne is using that to argue for a cap on three guns. How ridiculously stupid would that be? They come in, making out that they are holier than thou and accusing the government, because they do not agree with this ideological philosophy, of being captured by the gun lobby. They do not agree, so everyone else must have been captured by this interest group. No, it is just not what we want. It is another case of those living on concrete trying to tell us what pastimes and sports we can enjoy in the country. The member for Essendon and I do not agree on a lot, but we are certainly on a unity ticket on that one.

We have people in my electorate who shoot in certain types of disciplines. It is their chosen recreation, their chosen sport. You need four guns to shoot some disciplines. If you are going to go and compete on a Saturday, you need four guns. There are pistol events that need four guns. Then if you want to shoot two or three disciplines, you need 10 guns. A lot of these people then control vermin on the weekends, so then you need separate guns to shoot sambar deer, wild dogs and foxes and separate guns for rabbits, or if you have got a rat or mouse problem, whatever it is. You cannot be shooting rabbits in semirural residential areas with a gun that you are going to drop a sambar deer with. The member for Melbourne does not get that. You need an array of firearms when you are living on the land to be able to control vermin. One gentleman, who is an international shooter who also shoots vermin in East Gippsland, has over 20 guns. He explained that if we have a cap of even 20, he has got to sell the family heirlooms. He uses them all for different purposes.

I want to congratulate Ken Lay on his inquiry. I have got to know Ken over the journey of my time here in Parliament. He is a respected voice of reason and a level head, and I want to thank Ken for making time to meet and discuss these proposals with a panel of eight I put together from my electorate. That included Olympic and international shooters, vermin controllers and a gun shop owner, and they all explained very articulately and very, very commonsensically why a cap on guns will not work. But to suggest a cap of three in rural and regional Victoria is just ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous.

In my short time I just want to point out that in that panel we had with Ken Lay we had sporting shooters that shoot in multiple disciplines saying they need up to eight guns solely to do that. I want to get this in *Hansard*. They then control vermin on the family farm on the weekend. They need different firearms to do that. Just to go about their recreation and their way of life protecting their stock, they need over 10 guns to do that. By introducing or proposing a cap of three, you are stopping people from enjoying their recreation on the weekend or you are stopping people from keeping their business viable by controlling the vermin that need to be controlled. It is a ludicrous proposition that was put forward by the member for Melbourne, and everyone in this Parliament needs to understand the reasons and the rationale.

The member for Murray Plains and I do not stand up here because we have been captured by the gun lobby. We understand rural life, and we understand what these people need to participate on weekends and to look after their businesses. We talk to them. They live in our community. We know them. They should not be punished for the actions of terrorists in Sydney. We do not have a gun problem; we have a terrorist problem.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (16:54): I am pleased to rise today on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2026. As our shadow minister pointed out earlier, we do not oppose this bill, and nor should we, but I will echo the sentiments around AusCheck from the member for Murray Plains and the member for Gippsland East: just do not make that too expensive. A lot of times this is people's sport, it is their

livelihood or they are trying to look after their rural property. And I will reiterate what the member for Gippsland East just said: for the Greens to propose three guns is absolutely ridiculous. Mind you, they knocked back logging, but they have probably all got fire pits, so let us not be too hypocritical here.

A member interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: Wind pits. When you live in regional Victoria, a deer is a problem. It is a pest. Feral deer are out of control. I saw one running down the main street of Warragul not that long ago. That tells you how bad deer are getting in that place. But what everyone has to realise is that the people that own guns in Victoria are good, law-abiding people. I know a guy that has got probably over 50 guns, and he has put in a very special container for them. That gets checked by the police every three months. Every three months they are out there checking his facility – the guns get locked here, the ammunition gets locked there. They do the right thing. Unfortunately in Australia we have had a few incidents – obviously Bondi being one, Port Arthur another, the Father's Day massacre another, and the Lindt cafe. If we had to roll all those in, we would probably have those four really significant incidents. They were terrible incidents, do not get me wrong. But there are good and bad people everywhere, unfortunately.

Can we ever knock that out? I do not think so. I think at some point in time in the future we will see it again. But the law-abiding gun owners, not just in Victoria but around the country, should not be penalised by the actions of one or two psychopathic morons. It is as simple as that. They are good people. I know guys that go out on vermin control. They need their guns. To even think a three-gun cap would be a rational solution to the problem – we do not have a gun problem. This is the thing: the narrative is not there. We do not have a gun problem in Victoria. We have our sporting shooters. We have our hunters. They all have to be licensed for different activities. This is what people do not realise: the amount of licences you have got to have just to enjoy recreational shooting is phenomenal. The police checks and everything else just to obtain a gun licence are pretty arduous. I used to have a gun licence. I used to have guns. Unfortunately my previous wife made me get rid of the guns when we had kids; hence she is a previous wife. But these things happen. My point is that the people in this state of Victoria are good people. They are honest, they are law abiding and they do the right thing.

I think the government has got this right. I actually do. I think the government has got this legislation right. I am glad they did not do the kneejerk reaction that New South Wales did. Within 48 hours they went down to four guns. I think between Ken Lay and the government they have actually got the balance of this bill right. If it was not right, obviously we would have put in reasoned amendments and they would have been fairly strongly debated in the chamber. But the government in this situation has got this right. Listening to the member for Gippsland East, I did not realise that had happened with Ken Lay. That was good of him to go down and consult with those people in your patch. Congratulations to the member for Gippsland East for getting that set up.

In the final 20 seconds I have got, I just want to say this: every time an incident happens, we should not have a kneejerk reaction. We step back, we look, we study and we see what is going to improve the situation in the future. That is all I have got to say. Gun owners in this state do a good thing.

The SPEAKER: The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The SPEAKER: The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Equal Opportunity Amendment (Work from Home) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Jacinta Allan:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The SPEAKER: The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Paul Edbrooke:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The SPEAKER: The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Corrections Amendment Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Paul Hamer:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That this bill be now read a second time, government amendments 1 to 8 inclusive be agreed to and the bill be now read a third time.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (77): Juliana Addison, Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Annabelle Cleeland, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Wayne Farnham, Eden Foster, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Matthew Guy, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, David Hodgett, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Emma Kealy, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Anthony Marsh, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Tim McCurdy, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Richard Riordan, Michaela Settle, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne

Thomas, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson, Jess Wilson

Noes (2): Gabrielle de Vietri, Ellen Sandell

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Circulated amendments

Circulated government amendments as follows agreed to:

1. Clause 1, line 5, after "considerations" insert "and to validate certain actions taken without delegations in place between 29 April 2024 and 18 May 2026".
2. Clause 2, after line 6 insert –

   "(1) Section 1, this section and section 5A come into operation on the day on which this Act receives the Royal Assent.".
3. Clause 2, line 7, omit "This Act comes" and insert "(2) The remaining provisions of this Act come".
4. Clause 2, line 8, omit "it" and insert "this Act".
5. Clause 5, line 22, after "which" insert "section 5 of".
6. Clause 6, lines 26 and 27, omit "its commencement" and insert "the day on which it receives the Royal Assent".
7. Insert the following New Clause to follow clause 5 –

   '**5A New section 112F inserted**

   After section 112E of the **Corrections Act 1986 insert** –

   "**112F Validation – Corrections Amendment Act 2026**

   (1) In this section –

   Advanced Practitioner means a person employed under Part 3 of the **Public Administration Act 2004** in the Department of Justice and Community Safety in the role of Advanced Practitioner, including any person acting in or performing the duties of that office, position or role (however described);

   applicable period means the period commencing on 29 April 2024 and ending on 18 May 2026, inclusive of both dates;

   applicable provision means Parts 3, 3A, 3B, 3BA and 3C of the **Sentencing Act 1991** and Schedule 3 to that Act.

   (2) Every act or omission of an Advanced Practitioner in the exercise, or purported exercise, of any function, power or duty under an applicable provision during the applicable period has for all purposes, and is taken always to have had for all purposes, the same force and effect as it would have had if the Advanced Practitioner had been validly and lawfully delegated that function, power or duty by the Secretary.

   (3) Without limiting subsection (2), an act or omission of an Advanced Practitioner in the exercise, or purported exercise, of any function, power or duty under an applicable provision during the applicable period is, for all purposes, not invalid, and is taken never to have been invalid, by reason only of the fact that the Advanced Practitioner who did that act or omission was not validly and lawfully delegated that function, power or duty by the Secretary.

   (4) Without limiting subsection (2) or (3), any act, decision, determination, judgment or order (however described) of a court in any civil proceeding or criminal proceeding, or of a tribunal in any proceeding, made pursuant to or in reliance on an act or omission of an Advanced Practitioner to which subsection (2) or (3) applies is taken to be, and to always have been, for all purposes, the same as if the act or omission of the Advanced Practitioner during the applicable period had been done under a valid and lawful delegation.

   (5) Without limiting subsection (2), (3) or (4), the rights, duties and liabilities of a person affected by any act, decision, determination, judgment or order (however described) of a court in any civil proceeding or criminal proceeding, or of a tribunal in any proceeding, made pursuant to or in reliance on an act or omission of an Advanced Practitioner to which subsection (2) or

(3) applies are declared to be, and always to have been, for all purposes, the same as if the act, decision, determination, judgment or order (however described) of the court or tribunal in the proceeding had been made pursuant to or in reliance on the act or omission of the Advanced Practitioner during the applicable period done under a valid and lawful delegation.

(6) For the purposes of a civil proceeding or a criminal proceeding before a court, the fact that, but for subsection (2), (3), (4) or (5), an Advanced Practitioner was not validly and lawfully delegated any function, power or duty in respect of an applicable provision during the applicable period is to be disregarded in determining whether evidence obtained, directly or indirectly, as a result of an act or omission ought to be admitted.

(7) Subject to subsection (6), this section does not limit a discretion of a court to exclude evidence in a civil proceeding or a criminal proceeding.

(8) This section does not limit a discretion of a court to stay a civil proceeding or a criminal proceeding in the interests of justice.

(9) For the purposes of any proceeding before a tribunal (however described), the fact that, but for subsection (2), (3), (4) or (5), an Advanced Practitioner was not validly and lawfully delegated any function, power or duty in respect of an applicable provision during the applicable period is to be disregarded by the tribunal in determining whether to consider anything obtained, directly or indirectly, as a result of an act or omission.

(10) This section affects the rights of parties in –

(a) any civil proceeding or criminal proceeding before a court; or

(b) any proceeding before a tribunal (however described) –

whether the proceeding –

(c) is commenced before, on or after the commencement of section 5A of the **Corrections Amendment Act 2026**; or

(d) was commenced and finally determined before the commencement of section 5A of the **Corrections Amendment Act 2026**.”.’.

8. Long title, after “considerations” insert “and to validate certain actions taken without delegations in place between 29 April 2024 and 18 May 2026”.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The SPEAKER: The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

North East Link

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (17:08): (1749) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Earlier today I raised the outrageous circumstance of the 53-metre smokestack for exhaust emissions being placed in Bulleen without any form of filtration. I put on record also for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure the 49-metre structure at the northern end of the North East Link being built opposite Fairlie Avenue and Hester Walk on Greensborough Road. I note the local MPs, the member for Ivanhoe and the member for Bundoora, have never once had the courage to walk into this chamber to represent their constituents facing the onset of a 49-metre smokestack for unfiltered exhaust opposite hundreds of homes, just 150 metres from the closest home, right near Macleod College, similar to the smokestack in Bulleen, which is going to be opposite the Veneto Club, as I said earlier today, which is going to be close to hundreds of homes near Belle Vue Primary, near the Carey sports ovals and near the Trinity sports ovals. I see the member for Ivanhoe in the chamber listening

to this, and I hope that the Minister for Transport Infrastructure will listen to this, because I intend to distribute the answer I get to this to all the residents who are going to be impacted by these two smokestacks. I request the minister to provide the world's best filtration and purification for these two facilities on the North East Link that are going to spew out exhaust for hundreds of metres close to hundreds of homes, to schools and to sporting facilities. The government does not tell those residents, those schools and those sporting clubs what the long-term impact may be.

Remember that the Andrews, Allan and now Carroll governments usurped planning and environmental laws and regulations to ram through this project without getting proper advice and without going through proper levels of public discourse so that we could get world's best practice on these sites. Now what we have is world's least best practice, or what might be – who would know? The government tells us nothing. The North East Link Authority tells us nothing. These residents in Macleod deserve better. In Bulleen they deserve better. I request that the Minister for Transport Infrastructure provide the world's best practice on exhaust filtration for these two towers, and I request it urgently.

Reservoir planning

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (17:11): (1750) My adjournment matter concerns the controversial local issue of the Merrilands single-dwelling covenant. I actually addressed this issue earlier this week, but I would like to take the opportunity this evening to make a formal adjournment action request of the Minister for Planning. I will come to the exact details of that action request shortly.

By way of background, the Merrilands covenant is a private legal agreement that has been in place since that area was subdivided, mostly following World War II. In essence it prevents most landowners north of Broadhurst Avenue in that part of Reservoir from subdividing their property into townhouses or apartments. I should say it is a very popular policy in that part of the world. Many people moved there specifically because of the existence of the covenant and of course made a very large financial decision, a very big life decision, to move into that part of the world. But clearly also it is an arrangement that is at odds with our government's housing policy. We are not seeking to stop townhouses or apartments, and in fact, on the contrary, we are seeking to build more townhouses and more apartments, particularly close to transport hubs and train stations, in order to reduce emissions, to deal with congestion, to improve housing affordability but most importantly to give people, and particularly young people, the opportunity to live close to jobs, to education and to the cultural or social opportunities that they would like.

That is an important policy to us, so we have reformed the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to make it easier to remove the restrictive covenant. Previously the only realistic path that people took to remove that covenant was via the Supreme Court, but when our reforms come into effect next year there will be a path to remove the covenant via Darebin council's normal planning system. I do imagine that that will result in successful removals of the covenant, particularly in areas that do align with our housing statement and with council's housing strategy, notably those that are close to Keon Park station and close to Ruthven station.

However, there does remain a critical question in this particular policy area, and that is whether those applications to remove the covenant will be type 2 or type 3 applications. I would just like to put on the record my very strong support for the idea that they should be type 3 applications. In fact my adjournment action for the Minister for Planning is to make any application to remove or vary the covenant a type 3 application. I think that is consistent with the way we have approached our planning reforms generally. We are encouraging people to build homes and making it easier to build homes right across Victoria, but of course we are doing so in a way that reflects the existing planning structure that has been built up over a long time and has set planning expectations over a long time. I think it makes sense that in doing so we acknowledge that restrictive covenants, whilst an unusual part of the system, are nonetheless a legitimate part of the system and should be treated that way. I note in closing that we have a clear position on this but the Greens candidate and the Liberal candidate do not.

Disability support

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (17:14): (1751) My adjournment is to the Minister for Education, whoever that might be at this present time. I am not sure. Is it still the Premier, or has it moved on?

A member interjected.

Tim McCURDY: Okay. There have been so many jumping ship, I am not sure who is who anymore in the zoo. It might be only the Speaker left. My adjournment is to the Minister for Education. Blake Graham attends Oxley Primary School and has disability issues. Blake's mother says extra staffing is required for Blake to attend Queenscliff camp from 31 August to 3 September. The action that I seek is confirmation from the Minister for Education's office that this extra staffing support will be provided for Blake so that he can attend the school camp. The Oxley school has advised that they are not sure if Blake can safely attend the camp without extra staffing arrangements in place. I seek your urgent response in order to establish if Blake can attend the Queenscliff camp from 31 August through to 3 September.

Bushfire preparedness

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (17:15): (1752) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Renters, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on measures being taken to help inform renters across Monbulk when they move into a disaster-prone area before they sign on the dotted line. Many constituents across Monbulk and the Dandenong Ranges have told me they were fairly unaware of the high bushfire risk across the area when they first moved there, despite the significant implications this risk has for their safety, insurance costs, evacuation planning and overall wellbeing. I believe that this high risk of bushfires across the hills makes it critically important for people looking to move into the area to have access to clear, accurate and updated information about any disaster risks associated with a property before they sign a lease. Indeed, anyone moving into a bushfire- or flood-prone area should be informed of this before they commit to living somewhere. If you buy a home, the section 32 will outline the overlays of areas subject to bushfire or flood, but there is no equivalent disclosure or exits for someone wanting to rent. My community members have made it clear that they expect transparency when entering into rental agreements, particularly where a property's location may expose them to an increased risk. Accurate and transparent advice is helpful for those moving in to understand the risks and prepare for them, and that keeps all of our community safe.

Police resources

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:16): (1753) My adjournment tonight is to the Premier, and the action I ask of the Premier is to arrange a briefing for his Minister for Police to go through the discussions around section 10 of the Victoria Police Act 2013. The reason I raise this as an issue here in this place is because for the last 12 or 18 months we have spoken about police stations that have been closed across Victoria, with more than 40 police stations being closed. We have had responses from the former Premier, including things like:

> As the Leader of the Opposition should well know, operational decisions are a matter for the chief commissioner, not politicians.

We had another member who said:

> That is his duty to make … decisions, and we back the chief commissioner to know what is best for his policing force and for the safety of our community.

The member for Werribee has even jumped in and said that we always have to respect that operational decisions are independent from politics. The Minister for Police has even gone on record on 19 October 2023 to say that:

> Operational matters under section 10 of the Victoria Police Act 2013 are of course the responsibility of the Chief Commissioner of Police …

The same minister yet again on 20 June 2024 said:

> Operational decisions about the deployment of those police and the way in which they operate … vans on the road is a matter for the chief …

of police. On 1 April 2026, we can go into the former Premier saying that the decisions are for the chief commissioner. When we were looking at Mernda station, when we asked about the closing, we had a response that it was not the responsibility of the government, it was up to the chief of police.

The question I ask now is because section 10 has been used so often to not answer questions in this place when asking the government why they are closing police stations, with more than 40 having reduced hours or being closed across Victoria, and those same communities having an increase in crime – each and every time to be shut down as this is the responsibility of Victoria Police. Just yesterday, the new Premier came out and said one of his things he is going to achieve is he is going to reopen many of these stations across Victoria. So the question then needs to be asked: if he has the power to reopen them, will the government finally admit that it was their power that forced them to close? It was because this government has overseen 1500-plus vacancies on the police rosters, a reduction in funding, a removal of resources, that has meant Victoria Police have had to close stations all the way across Victoria, leading to an increase in the crime crisis we have here in this state. So I would ask the Premier to arrange a briefing from the Minister for Police so he can be updated on section 10 of the Victoria Police Act, so he can understand that it either was his responsibility they are closed or it is not his responsibility for them to reopen.

AusNet

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (17:19): (1754) I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources. I acknowledge the former minister for energy Lily D'Ambrosio, who today announced her retirement from the ministry and Parliament. I wish her well and thank her for her strong advocacy and implementation of policies to support working people with energy bills, and also for all of us, because she took strong action on climate change. I am also going to miss her as my neighbour, as our electorates are side by side. The action I seek is that the minister commence a full investigation into the power distributor AusNet regarding its policies and customer service systems and the speed with which it responds to customers it has failed. There was a power outage affecting 100 homes in Thomastown two weekends ago. The outage left homes without power for almost 24 hours and caused extensive damage to residents' power boards, appliances and heating units. The outage occurred because a pole-mounted transformer on the street blew up, causing a massive surge of power that homes could not cope with. I was told by one resident that the charge measured by an electrician in their house was over 400 volts, when the standard to the home is 230 volts. I have also been doorknocking and talking with many people. Some are elderly on the aged pension, and some are young families with mortgages. They cannot afford to have long delays to be reimbursed for the cost of replacing items – up to thousands of dollars in some cases. Similarly, they cannot afford to get less than the full replacement cost for items like heaters. A heater is essential in winter. It might be old, but it still works. They are offering $200 for a central heating system that has been destroyed, when a replacement one is thousands of dollars or more. This is just not good enough.

Industrial relations

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (17:21): (1755) Tonight I ask the Minister for Industrial Relations to follow up and take action on a serious case of wage theft, which I will outline. Using parliamentary privilege, tonight I raise allegations of stolen wages affecting at least 13 workers who have come to me for help. In 2025 these workers worked at two shops inside Crown Casino, a newsagency named Gazette and a convenience store called Staff Shop, registered under Smokva Holdings and/or MR Trading Pty Ltd and owned by Mr Mark Richerdson. The workers did long shifts, including overnight. They were first paid lawfully, then in cash and then for months not paid at all. One worker came to me and said she worked overnight shifts, 11 pm to 7 am, for three months with no pay. She is owed more than $12,000. When confronted, the manager Mr Maamoun Derbas said the business was in

financial difficulty and they would be paid later. It never happened. On 18 October workers received a WhatsApp message saying the business had been sold, and all contact was cut off.

This is not just a case of wage theft. It also exposes serious failures in the system meant to protect workers. These workers tried hard to get help. They contacted a community legal centre set up exactly for this situation, but they could not get an appointment. I also contacted the centre, who told me they were struggling due to lack of government funding. One worker called the Fair Work Ombudsman three times, was on hold for over an hour each time and never got through. My own office then called, and after a long wait we were told we could not report the matter on the worker's behalf. Both organisations are now helping the workers, which we really appreciate, but what if these workers had not had an MP to advocate for them? Wage theft is supposed to be a crime, but laws mean nothing if they are not enforced. The state Labor government has handed its industrial relations powers to the Commonwealth, but since then there have been zero federal criminal prosecutions for wage theft. We are told that Mr Richerdson has a track record of previous cases, yet he is still able to do what he is doing and continue to exploit people, so the system is clearly not working.

There are also other significant gaps in our laws and our systems meant to protect workers. For example, temporary visa holders like international students – working legally, as these workers were – are not eligible for compensation or protection under the Commonwealth Fair Entitlements Guarantee Act 2012. You have to be a citizen or permanent resident to get that protection and compensation if you are working for a business, you are not paid and then that business folds. Even worse, migrant workers who report wage theft are often then targeted by Australian Border Force, who turn up at that workplace and take action against the employee while the employer walks away scot-free. So I ask the minister to take this on and fix these gaps so that no worker is exploited like the, at least, 13 workers who have come to me who are in this horrible situation.

Transport workers

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (17:24): (1756) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Industrial Relations, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the work the Victorian Labor government continues to undertake to support stronger wages, conditions and protections for transport workers across our state, including in my electorate of Pascoe Vale. Our transport workers carry our nation, state and community, carrying our goods, services and resources that keep our livelihoods functioning. Without our transport workers, our community stops. Thanks to the advocacy from the mighty Transport Workers' Union (TWU), many of our transport workers across our skies, highways, freight rail, gig economy and rideshare sectors continue to benefit from fairer wages and conditions, including through bus driver safety screens that we introduced, tougher laws for assaulting and threatening transport workers, rideshare, road safety and transport safety reforms since 2014.

Notwithstanding the strides we have made over the years, the reality remains that the transport sector remains one of the most dangerous and hazardous places to work. In 2025, 210 people died in trucking incidents, for example. This needless loss of life is a tragic outcome of the pressures of an industry in need of ongoing reform. When it comes to owner-drivers in Victoria, the industry pressures are even more acute. An owner-driver is usually someone who owns or leases their truck, van or vehicle and pays for the operating costs, such as fuel, insurance, registration, servicing, repairs, tyres and finance repayments, and who contracts with one or more transport companies or directly with consumers. However, currently owner-drivers have no practical avenue for collective bargaining and limited access to timely, affordable dispute resolution. Existing rates and conditions schedules are advisory only, whilst disputes can take months to progress through the existing and limited available processes. This absence of protections creates safety issues for drivers and our broader community. Research consistently shows that pressures on rates and conditions leads to longer hours, lower pay, deferred maintenance on vehicles and unsafe road practices for everyone.

As fatalities in the heavy vehicle and transport industry have risen, Victoria must act to address these risks. That is why I was so pleased today to meet with the TWU delegation that visited here at Parliament to brief us on their experiences and concerns, including Michael Kaine, TWU national secretary; Sam Lynch, TWU director of organising; Frank Guarnaccia from Boral; Mandeep Singh from PrixCar; Leigh Shepherd from FBT Transwest; Charlie Albisi from Team Global Express; and Peter Green from FBT Transwest. Drivers told us of their fight for fair rates, the same rights and safer roads for Victorian owner-drivers. We heard how owner-drivers are small business owners running off their trucks, vans and cars. These workers, as I said, have significantly fewer rights. As I said, they are forced to work longer hours with lower pay just to get by, creating serious safety conditions.

Both New South Wales and Queensland have already established a framework that delivers enforceable minimum standards, binding determinations and specialist dispute resolution processes for owner-drivers. The TWU is calling on the Victorian government to urgently do the same for Victorian owner-drivers by amending the Owner Drivers and Forestry Contractors Act 2005 to introduce legislative reform to create a road transport commission with the powers to (a) resolve disputes involving independent contractors, including through mandatory arbitration, (b) make binding determinations on rates and conditions for owner-drivers and (c) set rates and standards across the transport supply chain. This will also help people across Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick who work in transport.

Public transport accessibility

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (17:27): (1757) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and the action I seek is that the minister develop a strategy to improve accessibility across Victoria's public transport network, with a particular focus on ensuring that families travelling with young children can use trains and trams safely and independently. Recently I was contacted by Astrid, a constituent who has recently moved to Hawthorn with her young family. She spoke warmly of her new neighbourhood and of the opportunities it offers to walk to local shops, parks and cafes and to use public transport to visit family and friends throughout Melbourne. Like many young families choosing to live in Hawthorn and the surrounding suburbs, Astrid wants to leave the car at home whenever possible. Public transport should make that easy. Unfortunately, the reality of navigating our network with two children under two in a double pram is harder than it should be.

Along Glenferrie Road in Hawthorn there are no accessible tram stops. At nearby railway stations there are often significant gaps between the train and the platform. Simply boarding or leaving a train becomes an exercise in planning, balancing a double pram and hoping that somebody nearby is willing to help. Astrid told me that she regularly relies on the kindness of strangers to lift her pram on and off public transport. While she is grateful for that assistance, she rightly points out that it should not be a prerequisite for using Victoria's public transport network. What I found most compelling, however, was her observation that she is an able-bodied person and that, if she finds using public transport difficult while travelling with two young children, how much harder it must be for older Victorians, people living with a disability, those with mobility impairments or anyone using a wheelchair.

Public transport patronage continues to grow, particularly in established inner-suburban communities such as Hawthorn, where many families deliberately choose to live because of their access to trains and trams. If we genuinely want to encourage more people to leave the car at home, our network must be updated to accommodate the realities of modern family life. Across my electorate there remain a number of older railway stations and tram stops that simply do not meet contemporary expectations of accessibility. While progress has been made in some locations, too many barriers remain for parents with prams, grandparents caring for young children and others whose mobility may be limited. Making our public transport system more family friendly is not simply about convenience. It encourages greater public transport use, supports more livable communities and ensures that parents are not discouraged from travelling simply because they have young children. Accordingly, I ask the minister to develop a comprehensive strategy to identify and prioritise upgrades at older stations and tram stops so that parents, carers and all Victorians can travel safely, independently and with dignity.

Gendered violence

Katie HALL (Footscray) (17:30): (1758) Words matter. My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and the action I seek is for the minister to outline the work that this government is taking to change a culture of disrespect towards women. I am also seeking for the minister to advise what action can be taken in response to the member for Brighton making continual references to attacks with baseball bats. His words have mattered to a constituent of mine who is a survivor of family violence. The victim contacted me regarding the member for Brighton's shameful ongoing use of this terminology, and I would like to read an excerpt from the email from this constituent, whose permission I have sought to raise this in the house this evening. The email reads:

> The issue that may seem small to many in Parliament but struck me last week was a report in the Herald Sun about the shadow AG, James Newbury. The article advised that he had been found to have engaged in parliamentary misconduct by directing violent language to another MP in a social media post, I believe it was the then Premier. The article read like he had leaked the report to the HS to double down on violent comments.
>
> I then caught some of question time yesterday where he used a reference to baseball bats again. Members of the Government briefly asked him to reflect on language used, but it was really startling to me that he would do that.
>
> Violent language, directed at colleagues in the workplace is never ok. Violent language directed at women at any time is not ok. Letting these things slide or go essentially unnoticed contributes to a culture where violence in our communities and violence against women is tolerated.
>
> I have experienced domestic violence myself and it's these seemingly small cultural levers that continue to contribute to endorsing and trivialising harm against women.
>
> I really expect better from our politicians and I expect that when they fall short of community expectations, they are not glossed over and they are given the time and attention required to generate debate and conversation to shift the dial.
>
> It is my hope in contacting you, that you do exactly that. Parliament should not be a race to the bottom, it should be a place where leaders model behaviours and demonstrate that strong debate can be had without resorting to this type of behaviour.

If the member will not have the decency to model behaviour that is not harmful towards victim-survivors and if the Leader of the Opposition does not have the decency to sanction him, I seek that the minister provide advice to reassure my constituent that our government is committed to protecting women from violence.

Responses

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (17:33): The member for Footscray is right: words do matter. What members in this Parliament say carries weight, and those with the privilege to serve in this place should carry themselves to a standard that Victorians rightfully expect. Those on the other side are all about words. In fact there was a 297-word 'plan' to tackle family violence, released just in time for an election – no funding, just 297 words. And where were they last decade when Labor called the nation's first Royal Commission into Family Violence? They had nothing to contribute. When we delivered every single one of its 227 recommendations, they stood by idly. Now, weeks out from an election, they have printed a pamphlet, and they have called it a plan.

Let us talk about what Labor has actually done. We have built a 24/7 crisis model. We have built the Orange Door network so that any Victorian anywhere has a front door to safety and support. We have funded Safe Steps to deliver support services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We have delivered new crisis accommodation for women and children escaping violence, and we have trained more than 400,000 workers to identify family violence risk before it turns deadly. We have built the only central information point of its kind in Australia so services can see the risks early and keep perpetrators in view rather than letting them slip through the cracks, and we have invested tens of millions of dollars to change the behaviour of men who use violence. The list goes on.

These are not just words; this is a world-leading system. It is a system that has been built over a decade, brick by brick, and it has been built by a government that treats the prevention of family violence as an absolute priority, because we know that a woman is killed every 11 days by her intimate partner. Let us compare that to those on the other side. They are a party committed to billions of dollars worth of cuts, and history tells us it is the frontline services that are keeping women and children safe that pay the price. You cannot claim to care about family violence while planning to strip the funding that underpins the entire system. Victorians know the difference between a government that builds and an opposition that cuts. But to the member for Footscray: please know that our government has never treated women's safety as a talking point, and we never will. There is more work to do, absolutely, about keeping women and children safe, but it is only a Carroll Labor government that will do it.

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (17:36): The honourable member for Bulleen, who I think is no longer with us, raised a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure seeking the very best preventative measures with regard to extraction filtration on the North East Link Program. I was certainly doorknocking up there in the Macleod area in my electorate, on the border with the member for Bundoora, and met people there who are excited about that project. They are enduring some challenges with a very significant project getting 15,000 trucks off the road every day, but they are excited about the significant investment and what that will mean for them and our community. It is a project that our community has supported over these past three elections.

The member for Preston raised a matter for the Minister for Planning, and the action he sought was with regard to the removal of covenants around the Merrilands development, particularly around type 3 covenants being in place, and he provided details on those matters. The member for Ovens Valley raised a matter for the Minister for Education, who is also the Premier, and the action that he sought was with regard to young Blake and his capacity to be supported to attend the Queenscliff camp in August or September. The member for Monbulk raised an action for the Minister for Renters with regard to an update on measures being taken to help inform renters across her Monbulk electorate when they move into a disaster-prone area before they sign on the dotted line.

The member for Berwick raised a matter for the Premier with regard to section 10 of the Victoria Police Act 2013 and some actions for me to take as Minister for Police in relation to the Premier. I will be sure to pass that on to the Premier. The member for Thomastown raised a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources with regard to the need to take action and investigate fully the provision of services for customers and residents in her electorate being affected adversely by the lack of action being taken by AusNet on those matters. The member for Melbourne raised a matter for the Minister for Industrial Relations in relation to wage theft cases, particularly affecting 13 workers, and I will be sure to pass that matter on.

The member for Pascoe Vale, the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Safety, raised a matter for the Minister for Industrial Relations with regard to updates and action that the Carroll Labor government is taking to support workers, particularly transport workers, in our state. It was good to be with the Transport Workers' Union with the member for Pascoe Vale and many of our colleagues and with both Sam Lynch and Michael Kaine and many of our transport workers. We were there with the Premier to understand some of the challenges that they face to make sure that there is not wage theft for them and the way in which they go about their work safely but also for them to be supported to do that both here by our government and also in Canberra. I was very pleased for us to be able to meet with them today. The member for Hawthorn raised a matter for the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and the action that he sought was with regard to accessibility for people on the public transport network across the state. And the member for Footscray had her matter responded to by my colleague. I think that covers it. Go Cats!

The SPEAKER: Go Pies! Thank you, Minister. Thank you, members. Can I, as always, thank the clerks and our parliamentary staff for their support this week. The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:40 pm.