Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 11 August 2026

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Ben Carroll (from 28 July 2026)

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

Daniel Andrews (to 27 September 2023)

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Gabrielle Williams (from 28 July 2026)

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

Jacinta Allan (to 27 September 2023)

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

Jess Wilson (from 18 November 2025)

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

John Pesutto (to 27 December 2024)

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

David Southwick (from 28 January 2026)

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

David Southwick (to 27 December 2024)

Leader of the Nationals

Danny O'Brien (from 26 November 2024)

Peter Walsh (to 26 November 2024)

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Anthony Carbines (from 15 April 2026)

Mary-Anne Thomas (to 15 April 2026)

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury (from 13 October 2025)

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

James Newbury (to 7 January 2025)

Members of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

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

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

Party abbreviations

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

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Tuesday 11 August 2026

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 12:04 pm, read the prayer and made an Acknowledgement of Country.

Condolences

Hon John Dyson Harrowfield

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (12:05): I move:

> That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of the Honourable John Dyson Harrowfield and places on record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Assembly for the district of Mitcham from 1982 to 1992, Minister for Small Business from 1991 to 1992 and Minister for Finance from January to October 1992.

John Harrowfield served this Parliament for more than a decade, and when you read back through his first speech in this place you get a very sincere sense of the kind of person he was. John believed in the best of Labor values: fairness, dignity, opportunity and the simple idea that government should make people's lives better. He was just 29 when he arrived here as the new member for Mitcham, the first Labor member to represent that community in almost three decades. From the beginning he was clear about why he was here. John said the election to Parliament was not an end in itself, it was a means to achieve something much more important: a better deal for people. And he meant it. In that first speech he talked about three groups he thought government needed to pay particular attention to: older Victorians, young people and families, people who could too easily be overlooked. John understood that dignity in old age was about more than money. It was about being able to see a doctor when you needed one, having decent public transport, having somewhere secure to live and knowing that after a lifetime of contributing your community would be there to look after you. As a local member John fought for better services for older people in Melbourne's east, including the Eastern Suburbs Geriatric Centre. A few years later he was announcing major funding to get that centre staffed and operated, along with advocating and getting more support for the Maroondah Hospital. When John saw a problem, he fought for something better. More than that, he helped deliver something better. That was his approach to public life.

John brought the same outlook to economics. He certainly knew the numbers. He was an accountant and an economics tutor, served on Parliament's economics committees and ultimately became Minister for Small Business and Minister for Finance. But he never forgot what those numbers actually represented. In his first speech John warned about economists who could be so absorbed in facts and figures that they forgot about the ordinary lives of the men and women of Victoria. That tells you a lot about the person John was. He understood the numbers, but he understood people mattered more. For John, a strong economy meant jobs. It meant small businesses being able to grow. It meant families having some security and young people having a bright future. John understood that public service was a privilege. He once described election to Parliament as the greatest honour a community could bestow upon one of its members. For more than 10 years John worked hard every day to repay that honour.

To John's family, his brothers Ian and Barry, their wives Gillian and Jane, and John's niece Emma, who are in the gallery today: know that John's work mattered. His values mattered. John's contribution will be remembered. On behalf of the government and this Parliament I extend our deepest condolences. Vale, John Harrowfield.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (12:09): I rise on behalf of the Liberal and Nationals coalition to pay our respects and add our condolences to this motion through which we mark the passing of John Dyson Harrowfield. John Harrowfield served in this chamber for a decade, between 1982 and 1992, as the member for Mitcham. He started his parliamentary career at the beginning of the Cain years and served as the Minister for Finance and Minister for Small Business

under Premier Kirner. He was the youngest of three brothers. The Harrowfields lived in Balwyn, and John attended Deepdene Primary School – a terrific school, if I might say – before the family moved to Nunawading, attending Nunawading Primary School and then Mitcham High. He studied a bachelor of commerce at the University of Melbourne and went on to work at Price Waterhouse.

He was a devoted Labor man who served his party and his cause with distinction. He was a longstanding member of the Blackburn North Labor Party branch and its president from 1974 to 1979. He entered the Parliament alongside a number of other MPs who were swept into office at the start of John Cain's premiership, including his close friend Neil Pope, the member for Monbulk. Speaking at his funeral last month, Neil said that John had four great loves: his family, the Richmond Tigers, the Labor Party and politics in general, and his beloved dog Ned, who was the brother of Neil's own dog. Neil had this to say of his friend:

> … John was a very serious politician. If John made a speech, you listened – no theatrics, lots of research. You'd know why the bill was being put forward. You'd know what it meant to the Labor government, because he did it so well. No-one researched better than John and spoke so well …

If any of those in the chamber find themselves with a moment to spare, I really do recommend watching the webcast of John's funeral, which is available online, because Neil's eulogy is deeply moving and paints a picture of a remarkable man truly committed to his Labor cause, beloved by his friends and family, with a dry wit and a gift for the written word. There is a rather hilarious retelling of the two of them making it back from a camping trip to be sworn in as ministers at Government House with only 2 minutes to spare, having only just managed to get changed out of their T-shirts and shorts and into their suits and ties. Sadly, I think these days none of us would get away with heading off to a remote camping trip just a few days before being sworn in. There is also quite a funny anecdote about an occasion when the two of them managed to meet Princess Margaret on the Isle of Man.

John had a great love for music and also became the family historian later in life. He self-published a family history entitled *High Hopes and Hard Times: The Story of the Harrowfield Clan since James and Sarah Harrowfield Settled in South Australia in 1837*. John loved his Labor Party, but he also loved politics generally and followed elections across the world with a very keen interest. He was a man who remained interested throughout his life in public policy and in politics and in how governments can make things better for the people they govern. It is fitting for us to pause and reflect today on the seriousness of purpose that John brought to his role as a parliamentarian. Neil had this to say of his dear friend:

> At times shy and introverted but strong in his beliefs about things that really mattered. That's why he was in politics.

Those of us who serve in this place could hope for no better than these words – to be remembered as strong in our beliefs about the things that matter, as having the privilege to serve our community in line with our sincerely held values. Political tides ebb and flow, but the friendships we forge in the fires of a political career endure, as do the legacies of parliamentary service. May John's words and deeds be remembered in this place, and I pass on my condolences on behalf of the Liberal and Nationals to his family here today. Vale, John Harrowfield.

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

The SPEAKER: As a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Honourable John Dyson Harrowfield, the house will now adjourn for 1 hour.

House adjourned 12:15 pm.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER took the chair at 1:19 pm.

Bills

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Apprenticeships, Traineeships, Schools and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Introduction and first reading

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (13:19): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to provide for a new regulatory scheme for apprenticeships and traineeships and in relation to the permission-to-teach scheme and school community safety orders and to amend the Workforce Inspectorate Victoria Act 2020 to provide for the appointment, functions and powers of the apprenticeship and traineeship commissioner and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (13:20): May I please request a brief explanation of the bill?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (13:20): You certainly can. The Education and Training Reform Amendment (Apprenticeships, Traineeships, Schools and Other Matters) Bill 2026 will strengthen protections for Victoria's apprentices and trainees, introduce a new statutory principle and strengthen protections to ensure Victorian schools remain safe places of learning and work.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Associations Incorporation Reform Amendment Bill 2026

Introduction and first reading

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Renters) (13:21): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (13:21): Can I please have a brief explanation of the bill, Minister?

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Renters) (13:21): Absolutely, member for Mildura. The Associations Incorporation Reform Amendment Bill 2026 will amend the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 to prevent associations with industrial relations or hate-motivated purposes or which have been listed by the Commonwealth as terrorist organisations from registering or maintaining registration as incorporated associations.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Introduction and first reading

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (13:22): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Crimes Act 1958, the Criminal Procedure Act 2009, the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, the Family Violence Protection Act 2008, the Fines Reform Act 2014, the Infringements Act 2006, the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme Act 2016, the Personal Safety Intervention Orders Act 2010, the Road Safety Act 1986, the Sentencing Act 1991 and the Youth Justice Act 2024 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:23): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (13:23): The Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026 will criminalise coercive control as a standalone offence, abolish good character as a mitigating factor in sentencing, make it unlawful to discriminate against someone because they have experienced or are experiencing family violence, expand the jurisdiction of a criminal court to extend or vary a family violence intervention order so victims do not have to keep telling their story and reliving their trauma, require the court to consider the views and safety of a victim-survivor when extending a family violence intervention order, expand the personal safety intervention order framework to recognise grooming as a prohibited behaviour, expand relief and exemptions under Victoria's fines system for victim-survivors to stop the financial impact of perpetrators using the system to abuse their partner, expand the work and development permit scheme to court fines and clarify when and how information under Victoria's world-leading information-sharing multi-agency risk assessment and management framework should be shared.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Workplace Legislation Amendment (Accident Compensation and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Introduction and first reading

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Sport, Minister for Equality) (13:24): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 in relation to guarantees and supported accommodation, the Accident Compensation Act 1985 in relation to supported accommodation, the Transport Accident Act 1986 in relation to supported accommodation, the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 in relation to the powers of representatives and coercive conduct and to make consequential amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Act 2026 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (13:25): I request a brief explanation from the minister, please.

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Sport, Minister for Equality) (13:25): Always for the member for Eildon. The Workplace Legislation Amendment (Accident Compensation and Other Matters) Bill 2026 will continue to help improve

Victoria's workers compensation system by cutting red tape for employers who self-insure and strengthening OH&S in Victoria by making employee representative arrangements work better.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Planning and Environment Amendment (AI Data Centres Moratorium) Bill 2026

Introduction

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (13:26): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to provide for a moratorium on AI data centre approvals and for other purposes.

I move to introduce this bill as an urgent matter for this Parliament to consider today – for a moratorium, a pause, on all new hyperscale AI data centre approvals across Victoria. The Victorian Labor government has rolled out the red carpet for some of the biggest billionaire tech corporations in the world, and Labor has promised to be 'ruthless' in fast-tracking their development, openly declaring it wants as many data centres in Victoria as possible. But the thing is: what are the consequences for our future, our economy, our workers and our communities? These massive hyperscale data centres chew through an extraordinary amount of electricity, use our water and take up huge amounts of land that really should be set aside for housing. We have seen outside of Geelong an example of how land that was set aside for housing has now been bought by a company seeking to build a data centre there, in the middle of a housing crisis. And of course they have impacts for communities: trucks, noise pollution and air pollution.

But the thing that I think we need to look to is the cautionary tale of what has happened overseas. We saw in Ireland, when they rolled out the red carpet for these huge AI data centres, data centres going from using 5 per cent of Ireland's energy to 22 per cent of Ireland's energy. Nearly a quarter of their energy was used by AI data centres, and bills skyrocketed. People were paying more than €360 more on their energy bills.

We have also seen AEMO and a report by the Climate Council come out and say that if AI data centre growth is unchecked, as it is currently, we will miss our climate targets – our emissions reduction targets – precisely at a time when we are heading into a super El Niño this summer fuelled by climate change. We are already seeing the impacts of drought, of floods and of climate impacts on our communities. We should be doing everything we can to meet our climate targets as fast as possible and in fact increase our emissions reduction targets to bring down emissions as fast as humanly possible. Rolling out the red carpet for these AI hyperscale data centres really puts all of that at risk, particularly when we are seeing that a lot of these data centres are not using renewable energy and there are no rules to show that they need to use renewable energy. At the moment we are seeing a lot of them with diesel backup generators and with gas backup generators. Anthony Albanese is out there saying that he may put in place rules around their energy use but has left wide open the possibility for these AI data centres to use gas. We know that gas is a fossil fuel. We know diesel is a fossil fuel. The one that is proposed in Port Melbourne has a huge amount of diesel storage underneath it, and the local firefighters there are saying it is a ticking time bomb.

This is an urgent matter because there are 40 of these data centres already in Victoria and we have an unknown number in the pipeline that Labor wants to fast-track as quick as humanly possible, bypassing all the regular planning approvals and bypassing community consultation. It is communities who suffer. We do not know how many are coming down the pipeline. We do not know how fast they are being approved. It is all through this new development facilitation pathway that they are being approved to bypass all the normal regulations that planning should go through.

That is why it is really important that we put a pause and a moratorium on right now. We have seen New York State come out and put a moratorium on data centres. We have seen the cautionary tale of

what has happened in places like Texas and Georgia. In Georgia the data centres are literally turning the local community's water brown and people cannot drink that water, as I understand it, so there are huge consequences. We do not want data centres to become the next gas industry 2.0, where the government says, 'Bring your investment here,' but actually what ends up happening is that they use our resources, they take the profits overseas and there are very few jobs actually remaining in our community. They are not actually investing very much in our community beyond just the initial construction phase. The profits go overseas to the big tech billionaires, and it is the Victorian community that is left with all of the consequences for our energy, for our water when we are about to head into drought or we are already in drought, for the land that we cannot now use for housing and for the air pollution, the fumes and the noise that communities have to live with as they live next to these data centres. This is a matter on which we need some vision. We need some regulations in place, and it is sensible to put a moratorium on right now until we have those rules and regulations in place.

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (13:31): I rise today in opposition to the introduction of this bill. On this side of the house we are ready to get on with the government business program. This is not a legitimate bill. This is another cheap political stunt by the Greens, and that is why we on this side of the house do not support the introduction of this bill.

Data centres are an incredibly important conversation that we are all having in our communities right now. I have had many conversations with local residents about data centres, including about their concerns. But it is not just about a quickly thought through bill introduced into Parliament so someone can go and film some TikToks; this is very important work that the government is leading and that the government is considering right now. In Victoria we acknowledge the importance of having the necessary guardrails in place to ensure that we can strike the right balance for communities and prevent impacts on energy supplies and water supplies, and this government will do the work. We will take an evidence-based approach using data from transport, energy and water to ensure that the most sustainable locations for data centres are chosen. This is incredibly important work, and I am really proud that this government is taking action to ensure that data centres are going to be built in the appropriate locations to support our growing economy.

It is not just the state government that is doing this important work; we are working hand in hand with the federal government to develop a national approach to ensuring that data centres are investing in our energy networks and in renewable generation – making sure that they do not increase energy prices for Victorian households and businesses. This is important work that the federal government are doing a power of work on. Recently we have had a number of announcements from the Prime Minister regarding this, including a new Office of AI to sit in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, a requirement for data centres to be using renewable energy and not putting additional strain on the energy grid, and a requirement that data centres are not built in residential areas.

This is an incredibly important conversation, I think, to every person in this place. We have all spoken with local residents who are very concerned about what data centres in their neighbourhoods could look like. Data centres are essential to our economy here in Victoria. They are the backbone to so many services and industries in our state, so we do need data centres, but we do need to get them right. That is the work that this government is doing: making sure that we get data centres right. We are doing a power of work behind the scenes on this. We are not introducing whimsical bills so that we can jump up on TikTok and say our piece for the likes and for the comments. We are getting on with the job. We are taking a serious approach to this serious issue. In conclusion, I do not support the introduction of this bill.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (13:34): I rise to support the introduction of a moratorium on new data centre approvals. The Victorian Labor government has rolled out the red carpet for some of the biggest tech companies in the world to expand their AI data centres, promising to be ruthless in fast-tracking their development and openly declaring that they want as many data centres as possible. These massive hyperscale AI data centres chew through an extraordinary amount of energy and water. They take up huge amounts of land which could be used for housing or for nature or for community.

They bring trucks, they bring air and noise pollution to our communities, and they put more pressure on household energy bills, swallowing up enormous amounts of renewable energy and keeping Victoria hooked on dirty coal and gas for longer.

Electricity demand and water usage from data centres in Victoria are expected to more than triple by 2030, pushing up our energy prices by 23 per cent. One data centre bigger than the Hoddle grid is expected to consume more power than the state's last remaining coal plant producers. It is our communities that pay the price for Labor's relentless fast-tracking of data centres, and especially our working-class and our multicultural communities. They have become the chosen dumping ground for new hyperscale AI data centres. We have seen that play out overseas. We have seen it in the US, where communities started to import drinking water after data centres moved in and turned their drinking water brown. We have seen it in Ireland, where they encouraged rapid expansion of hyperscale data centres, and it pushed energy consumption to being over 20 per cent of the whole energy grid. Now massive data centres use more electricity than all of the urban homes in Ireland, and a recent report from Friends of the Earth and Beyond Fossil Fuels found that Irish households cumulatively paid as much as $1.2 billion in increased electricity prices between 2015 and 2023 because of the intensity of data centre presence on Ireland's grid.

Instead of taking this as a cautionary tale, Labor are doing everything that they can, saying that they want to become the data-centre centre. What is this fast-tracking for? It is to boost the profits of multinational tech corporations. On top of the impacts on community and the environment, these big data centres enable massive tech companies like Palantir and OpenAI to profit from mass surveillance and autonomous weapons of war that are killing innocent people in the US and Israel's illegal wars. Advances in AI are taking tech surveillance to unprecedented levels. Instead of considering how to protect our civil liberties in this changing context, our governments are rolling out the red carpet for our tech companies. You will hear in these communities Labor MPs like the member for Lara and the member for Broadmeadows telling their communities that they do not support these massive AI data centres, and like the member for Footscray – out there talking to communities, paying lip-service to protecting them, saying that they do not support them. Yet in this chamber, this is the real test: now there is a bill in front of this Parliament and these members will get to vote on whether or not these AI data centres will continue to expand for the profit of tech billionaires overseas.

AI is also a threat, and these big data centres are threatening our arts community. The community face already insecure work and unstable funding, and AI data centres put their livelihoods at great risk. It steals our jobs and it steals content and butchers it. We are at the coalface of rapid AI expansion, and we are rightly concerned about how it will be used and what it will do to our environment and to our communities. That is why this moratorium is so important. Victoria needs strict new rules in place to protect our communities, to protect the environment and to make sure that new data centres use 100 per cent renewable energy of their own, not dirty coal, dirty gas and dirty diesel. Our traditional owners and local communities should have a genuine say on what gets built in their communities. We need a proper strategy for the broader impacts of AI on workers, on artists, on privacy and on our personal data. Every new approval makes this harder to unwind. Every new development approved without environmental safeguards creates consequences that communities will have to live with for decades. That is why this bill is urgent.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (13:39): I rise to oppose the introduction of this bill, and I do it on the basis of our record. The concerns that are raised by the Greens relate to areas where this state has seen fantastic improvement in energy, water, jobs and careful planning. I think around 3 per cent of energy in this state was from renewable energy in around 2006, and now we are at about 60 per cent and we are going to hit our target of 95 per cent. That does not happen unless you have a government that is carefully planning for the grid and carefully planning for energy use and energy production. If anyone is to be trusted to put the correct guardrails in place and also to make the most of the opportunity that is presenting itself, it is actually this side of the house, because beyond the idealistic position of those opposite, there is the very real matter of jobs and investment. People in my

community are looking forward to the logistics and industrial and commercial sites, which are coming more and more to the north, and our local TAFEs are training people for the jobs, which will be close to home. Some of those jobs might involve data centres, information technology and the future that is upon us, and it is something not that this government is bringing into being but that the whole world is experiencing. I reiterate that the Labor government's approach to making sure that workers have the skills they need and the jobs they want, our careful management of the energy grid, our reduction of power prices through renewable energy generation and our focus and fight for fair water for Victoria show we are the best people to manage this.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (13:41): I rise to speak in support of the motion to introduce a bill for an act to amend the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to place a moratorium on all new data centre approvals. Victoria's AI data centre boom is an existential threat to our climate and our community. If we do not hit the brakes, the AI data centre frenzy will halt our transition to renewable energy. It will raise the cost of electricity. It will suck our reservoirs dry and carpet our suburbs with these noisy, ugly monoliths. Unless we introduce and pass this bill, the Carroll Labor government will keep dirty coal-fired power stations open beyond their scheduled closure dates to feed these centres' thirst for power. The 350-hectare proposed project for Plumpton in Melbourne's north-west could use more electricity than Victoria's largest power station Loy Yang A can produce.

Unless we pass the bill and impose a moratorium on new data centres, we risk irreparable harm to our climate. Most AI data centres use dirty diesel generators and gas turbines for backup. The bill is urgent because we must act to protect Victorians from data centres burning down our suburbs or gassing them with diesel fumes. When I say 'burning down our suburbs', I am not making this up: the Project Dune data centre proposed for Campbellfield wants to store 7 million litres of diesel just 250 metres from people's homes. This poses a real risk of uncontrollable fires, supercharged by their lithium ion batteries which, if they have a thermal runaway, can generate extreme heat and toxic gases.

Unless we address this with this bill today, the AI data centre frenzy will drain Victoria's drinking water supplies as well. Last year Greater Western Water was assessing 19 data centre applications, requesting to use a total of nearly 20 gigalitres of water a year. That is roughly equal to 8000 Olympic swimming pools, and that is just from Greater Western Water last year. We have already heard about Ireland, where data centres now consume just over a fifth of the country's electricity. The surge in demand has strained their grid to breaking point, forcing their government to spend around A$1.6 billion on emergency gas generators. It has meant that Ireland is delayed in meeting its climate targets, and Irish power bills rose by a cumulative average of A$590 between 2015 and 2023.

We heard the member for Lara describe our bill as whimsical, which is kind of nice, and a stunt, but what we are hearing from both state and federal governments is a kind of aspiration that there might be criteria for data centres but without any clarity about what those criteria are. Our bill will require 100 per cent of energy for data centres to be new renewable energy, plus an additional contribution to the transition away from coal. Our bill will require protection of drinking water supplies, it will protect First Nations cultural heritage and it will mandate meaningful engagement with local communities. Data centres are not the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow that the government or the member for Yan Yean thinks that they are. The number of ongoing long-term jobs in data centres is very low indeed compared to the short-term construction hit of jobs. When the Victorian government bypassed the Maribyrnong council to green-light the construction of the West Footscray data centre, the community never had a say, which is why meaningful engagement with local communities is so important. We are hearing a growing clamour of community opposition from grassroots campaigns against data centres all across the state, including in Melton, Geelong, Port Melbourne, Campbellfield and South Morang. We need to urgently pass this bill to halt new data centres until we can guarantee that government will obtain the community's prior and informed consent before they are built.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:46): I rise to oppose the procedural motion from the member for Melbourne. I should say I always enjoy following the member for Brunswick. In fact we were just chatting the other day about his attention to detail on many issues and the fact that he has always been

an MP who does his homework, and we have all valued his enormous contribution to this place in that respect. But it gives me no pleasure, really, at all, on this particular occasion to suggest, and perhaps to suggest quite seriously, that despite his fantastic attention to detail, particularly in those areas of health care of course, which he knows very, very well, that I do very genuinely believe that on this particular issue the Greens' proposal is underdeveloped and does not really fully address the issue that we have in front of us with AI and data centres.

The first reason I would put that to you is because I am not sure about the terminology that the Greens use. I am not sure why we are calling them data centres. They are not data centres. They do not contain RAM. They do not contain hard drives or file servers. They are not storing people's phone photos or videos or things like that. These are centres that predominantly contain GPUs, Nvidia GPUs of all things – graphics processing units. The main thing that these centres do is run millions and millions of linear equations. They are effectively the thinking centres of these vast artificial brains that we are building. It is not a perfect analogy that they are brains, but certainly they would be much better called 'inference centres' or 'compute centres'. I do think that the terminology that the Greens are using – and I do not say this as deliberate – in calling them data centres is very much playing into the corporate interests of the people who are trying to develop these things, because I believe it significantly underplays the radical nature of these developments. They are not simply a new industry in the pedestrian way that might be the case if this were a new aluminium smelter or something. This is really a technology that is transformative and profoundly different.

If we look at where the world is right now, people have built autonomous agents. People have shown that those autonomous agents can work together and collaborate with each other in sneaky ways that are hard for humans to detect. People have shown that alignment with what is initially set up for an agent is often difficult to achieve. We have shown already – and some recent incidents have proven this – that these systems can hack other computer systems better than humans can. In fact we now are in the situation where the only realistic form of defence against AI-driven cybersecurity attacks is to fully automate your defence systems as well, which puts us in a position of thinking about a world in which global IT infrastructure is heavily controlled by autonomous agents. Not only that, but we are in a world where people are seeking to build AGI to replace white-collar jobs and seeking to connect it to robotics to replace blue-collar jobs and in a world in which people are looking very seriously at the military applications of this technology and building autonomous systems for the battlefield. We face a profound regulatory challenge here.

Jade Benham interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: The member for Mildura interjects about the *Terminator* films. I have spoken about this before, but if you had asked me 15 years ago if we were ever going to end up in a *Terminator* world, we would have laughed and said the chances are one in a billion. Well, maybe now they are one in a thousand, but one in a thousand is not a chance that I think any of us like about that scenario.

As I said before the interjection, we are facing a profound regulatory challenge. We have this technology that in some respects looks like the mobile phone, insofar as it is beloved by consumers, and people are rushing out and getting involved in this – people are downloading ChatGPT, they are downloading Claude, they are downloading the latest models of their own volition – and these companies are barely needing to do any marketing at the moment. The growth in their revenue is extraordinary, yet at the same time it is a technology that has that general-purpose consumer focus that also has a long-tailed downside risk. We should not overplay this, but this is not unlike the nuclear weapons debate. There are, at the very far end of the tail of possible distributions, some very, very serious outcomes that – it is not overstated – call into question the future and the nature of humanity.

In that set of circumstances, whilst I understand where the Greens are coming from, we as a government are focused on the broad, big, genuine global regulatory issue that we all have to face here. What we have before us today is, frankly speaking, a narrow, crude and simplistic approach to

an issue that is much bigger than that. That is why I oppose the motion that has been brought forward by the member for Melbourne, and I fully support the government's attempts to deal with this issue properly, in its entirety and in a global sense. This is not just to address the immediate issues, as important as they are, but to ensure that we address the cause, if you like, and not just the symptoms of what is possibly one of the great regulatory issues this Parliament will address in the coming decades.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (31): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Wayne Farnham, Will Fowles, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Tim Read, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ellen Sandell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Jess Wilson

Noes (50): Juliana Addison, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Motion defeated.

Business of the house

Notices of motion and orders of the day

The SPEAKER (13:57): General business, notices of motion 10 to 21, 23 and 24 and order of the day 4, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 5 pm today.

Petitions

Monash Freeway pedestrian bridge

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) presented a petition bearing 1284 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the important role that the pedestrian bridge crossing the Monash Freeway adjacent to Salesian College plays in supporting safe access for students, families, pedestrians and cyclists within the local community.

The bridge is used daily by large numbers of Salesian College students, staff, local residents and visitors travelling between surrounding neighbourhoods and community facilities. As usage of the bridge continues to grow, community members have raised concerns regarding pedestrian safety, the adequacy of the existing protective barriers and the long-term suitability of the current infrastructure over one of Victoria's busiest freeways.

The community is seeking upgrades, including higher protective railings and associated safety improvements, to strengthen community safety outcomes and support the wellbeing of vulnerable members of the community.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Victorian Government to support upgrades to the Monash Freeway pedestrian bridge adjacent to Salesian College, including higher protective railings and any associated safety improvements, to enhance pedestrian safety, support community wellbeing

and ensure the bridge remains a safe and accessible connection for students, local residents, pedestrians and cyclists.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Wallan wallan regional park

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo) presented a petition bearing 2879 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that immediate steps be taken to establish and deliver the wallan wallan Regional Park (the Parkland) as presented in the State Government commissioned study 'Feasibility for wallan wallan Regional Park Report' 2022. The Parkland will protect 3,000 hectares in the upper reaches of the Merri Creek in the face of accelerating growth in Melbourne's north, featuring wetlands and waterways for wildlife including migratory populations of threatened birds.

Alongside the urbanising landscape, the Parkland will provide a place for the community to explore nature together. Shared trails will enable cycling from Melbourne to Wallan. Importantly, it will also mitigate the impacts of flooding by including space for water containment and treatment. Without this, disastrous floods may affect land from Wallan through to Melbourne.

The State Government is moving ahead with housing and industrial projects in this region. The same focus must be shown to the provision of parkland and conservation of natural areas. Priority projects to deliver the Parkland should be included within the 2026–27 State Budget and following years, including studies in hydrology and Indigenous cultural values.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to commit to the establishment and adequate funding of the 3,000 hectare wallan wallan Regional Park and to complete research studies to address knowledge gaps and ensure well-informed holistic parkland planning.

Route 58 tram

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) presented a petition bearing 263 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the lack of accessibility along Melbourne tram Route 58. Despite being one of the city's most important and heavily utilised routes, connecting key destinations such as the Parkville hospital precinct, Queen Victoria Market, South Yarra and Toorak, only a small number of stops are currently Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. The majority remain inaccessible to people who use wheelchairs, mobility aids or prams.

Route 58 serves thousands of Victorians each day and plays a vital role in providing access to education, healthcare, employment and recreation. However, without a fully accessible tram fleet and corresponding level stops, many passengers are excluded from using the service safely and independently.

In particular, students and staff at Melbourne High School, located near South Yarra Station, have observed the daily challenges faced by commuters with mobility needs when boarding or alighting from trams. Ensuring Route 58 is DDA-compliant would improve inclusion, independence and equality for all public transport users.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to prioritise the delivery of accessible tram super stops along Route 58 at intervals of no more than 500 metres, incorporating level platforms, minimal horizontal and vertical gaps, ramps, handrails, tactile ground surface indicators, and clear audible and visual passenger information, and commit to the delivery of a fully accessible, entirely low-floor tram fleet on Route 58 within a clear, funded and publicly reported timeframe.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Murray Valley Highway–Frank Drive, Yarrawonga

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) presented a petition bearing 669 signatures:

Issue:

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.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls 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 tomorrow.

Altona North train services

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown) presented a petition bearing 5779 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly Altona North has experienced significant population growth, yet despite a metropolitan train line running directly through the suburb, there is no train station servicing the area. This has created a major gap in train service coverage between neighbouring stations, leaving a large residential community without rail access.

Residents must rely on unreliable bus services that are heavily affected by peak-hour traffic. These services are also not disability-friendly, with many bus stops lacking seating or basic accessibility infrastructure. The closest train station is Newport Station, where parking is limited, stressful, and often unavailable, placing ongoing pressure on that station and surrounding streets.

From door to door commuting to the CBD currently takes 1 hour to travel to work and up to one and a 1 hour 30 min to return home, resulting in more than 7.6 hours a week commuting when attending the office three days per week. The absence of a train station in Altona North negatively impacts accessibility, reliability of public transport, and residents' quality of life.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly commit to the planning and reopening of a train station in Altona North, utilising the existing rail line that passes through the suburb, in order to address the current gap in train service coverage.

This would provide reliable, accessible public transport for residents, significantly reduce commuting times, relieve congestion at Newport Station, and better support the growing population of Altona North and surrounding communities.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Members

Ministry

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:01): I wish to advise the house that there have been changes to the ministry and the representing ministers in each chamber, as well as changes to parliamentary secretaries. I am pleased to provide a copy of these changes to the Clerk for circulation as necessary.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Construction industry

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. Before a royal commission has even been established, the Premier told the *Guardian* that he does not believe government officials knew about alleged corruption on the Big Build as it unfolded. How many government officials did the Premier personally speak to before drawing that conclusion?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:02): I made it very clear that what occurred on these construction sites was inappropriate. It is why I have called a royal commission.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lara is warned.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): Senior government official Kevin Devlin repeatedly warned the former Premier about serious misconduct on the Big Build and the impact it was having on project costs. Did the Premier speak to Mr Devlin about what he knew before publicly declaring that he did not believe government officials knew about corruption on the Big Build?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:02): No.

Ministers statements: crime

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:03): Our Labor government is tough on the causes of crime and we make no apology for it, because our first duty is keeping people safe – safe in their homes, safe on the streets and safe on public transport. Victorians deserve laws that protect victims; criminals deserve consequences for serious crime. We will treat violence like it is a stab wound in an emergency department, because violence is a disease and we are going to do everything we can to make sure we do. That is why we introduced adult time for violent crime. That is why there are more police, more PSOs and more reservists. It is why bail refusals are at record highs. And today we are going further, protecting women and victim-survivors. We are making coercive control a standalone crime. We are stopping convicted –

Members interjecting.

Ben CARROLL: I thought those opposite would want to listen to this. We are making convicted rapists hiding behind suppression orders –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is required to be factual. He voted against coercive control laws.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order.

Ben CARROLL: Thirdly, we are stopping perpetrators using good character references to argue for lighter sentences. The principle is simple: our justice system should put victims before offenders. Those opposite like to talk tough, but we know what their record is. Last time they were in office $100 million was cut from Victoria Police.

Members interjecting.

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

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, ministers statements are not an opportunity for the Premier to falsely attack the opposition.

Anthony Carbines: On the point of order, Speaker, the Premier is well within his rights to compare and contrast Labor's new policies and new directions and support with those opposite, who continue to cut from Victoria Police when they have the opportunity.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order.

Ben CARROLL: I apologise. It is actually $40 billion they want to cut from Victoria Police, law and order and our courts, making Victoria more unsafe.

James Newbury: Speaker, I renew my point of order.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to come back to his ministers statement.

Ben CARROLL: On this side of the chamber we will strengthen our laws, back our police and hold serious offenders to account because every single Victorian deserves to feel safe, and as Premier I am committed to doing that.

Government integrity

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): My question is to the Premier. If government integrity is no longer optional, why hasn't the Premier sacked Tony Bates?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:06): I made it very clear that I accepted all recommendations from that report, and I am getting on with implementing them.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this was a very, very, very detailed question that was very simple, and the Premier is refusing to answer the substance of the question.

The SPEAKER: I cannot tell the Premier how to answer the question. The Premier has concluded his answer.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): The Premier has said that both Tony Bates and Lisa Neville must consider their positions. Isn't it the case that the Premier has said they must consider their positions because he is too weak to sack his friends?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Members will come to order. The member for Gippsland East is warned.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:07): Compared to those opposite, the government I lead –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. Members will be removed from the chamber without warning, member for Yan Yean.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, sledging is not relevant.

Anthony Carbines: On the point of order, Speaker, *Rulings from the Chair* is very clear:

> Points of order must not be used to deliberately disrupt the proceedings or to respond to debate.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has only commenced his answer. I call on the Premier to answer the question that was asked.

Ben CARROLL: The government I lead will follow due process, and that is what I will do.

Ministers statements: police resources

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (14:08): Victoria has the largest police force in the country. These men and women work tirelessly to keep Victorians safe 24/7. As the Minister for Police, I want to thank them because they should be proud of the work they do for our state, and I can say proudly that Labor will always back them. Victorians know that Labor will back police and back the Chief Commissioner of Police. We have invested a record $5 billion and funded more than 3600 additional frontline police. Our Made for More campaign is pulling record applications, and the academy is full. Labor has delivered the toughest bail laws in the country, adult time for violent crime

and a nation-leading machete ban. And it is working. There were over 76,000 arrests in the year to March – 210 arrests every day. Crime is down almost 3 per cent, youth offending down 6 per cent and aggravated burglary down 22 per cent. Crime is falling thanks to Labor's tough laws, but there is always more work to do. The Premier has been clear: when crimes are committed, they will be dealt with as communities expect.

I hear a lot of talk from those opposite, but the last time the Liberals were in government they cut $130 million from Victoria Police and did not fund a single extra officer above attrition – not one. Now they are back with the same playbook: $40 billion in One Nation–coalition cuts.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, ministers statements are not an opportunity to attack the opposition.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order. The minister was comparing a previous government minister.

Paul EDBROOKE: Facts are just facts; the truth is the truth. I was always proud, when I was a firefighter, to serve with Victoria Police. Now it is the honour of my life to be the police minister and back in Victoria Police and back in the chief commissioner. It is only this Labor government that will back Victoria Police every single day in keeping Victorians safe.

Construction industry

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): My question is to the Premier. Two weeks have passed since the Premier declared that integrity would no longer be optional. If integrity is no longer optional, why are there still no terms of reference for his royal commission into the Big Build, despite the Premier promising they would be finalised last week?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:11): This is a very serious endeavour. We are going to get it done, and we are going to get it done right.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): A royal commission was supposed to be the Premier's first act. Isn't it the case that he is continuing to delay it to prevent former Labor premiers and Mick Gatto from being interrogated in the witness box before the election?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:12): The opposition leader knows that is not the case.

Ministers statements: community safety

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Victim Support, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Community Sport) (14:12): I rise today to update the house on the Carroll Labor government's commitment to keeping Victorians safe. Every Victorian has the right to feel safe in their home, in their community and in their local neighbourhood. That is why we have made community safety the key consideration when determining whether bail is granted. There are also tougher bail tests for those charged with serious offences and tougher consequences for breaking bail. These changes are already making a difference, sharpening the focus on community safety and reducing the number of violent and repeat offenders in the community. And we have invested $956 million to expand our correctional facilities and enhance safety and service delivery across the corrections and youth justice systems. We also know that the evidence shows that for most young people diversion from the justice system and early intervention are the most effective approaches to reduce reoffending.

Our reforms do not end there, and we understand that when a crime has been committed victims must be supported. That is why we introduced the financial assistance scheme, a model that is victim centred, allowing Victorians impacted by crime to access counselling, medical services and safety expenses, along with other expenses that may help their recovery. Since 2024 we have invested more than $470 million in the scheme. Any victim of crime is one too many, and my thoughts are with those who have been affected by criminal behaviour. Along with the Premier and the Minister for Police, I

want to thank Victoria Police, corrections and youth justice staff and all victim support services for the work that they do every single day to keep Victorians safe.

Construction industry

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:14): My question is to the Premier. The Premier says there will be zero tolerance for corruption after $15 billion was siphoned from Victorian taxpayers into the hands of bikies –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Brighton to continue, without assistance from the house.

James NEWBURY: The Premier says there will be zero tolerance for corruption after $15 billion was siphoned from Victorian taxpayers into the hands of bikies and criminals while he sat around the cabinet table. Will the Premier confirm that it remains government policy for former premiers or MPs prosecuted over corruption to receive a taxpayer-funded parliamentary pension whilst they face trial?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:16): I have made it very clear: whether it is in business, politics or indeed the union movement, there will be zero tolerance for those who misuse their position.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question was specifically whether former members who turn out to be crooks get a parliamentary pension.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order.

Ben CARROLL: I announced in my first press conference and called the royal commission. I also said we will set up in parallel –

James Newbury: On a further point of order, Speaker, the Premier is required to be factual and has not called a royal commission. You are required to be factual. There is no royal commission.

The SPEAKER: Member for Brighton, you will address your comments through the Chair. I do not uphold the point of order.

Ben CARROLL: We announced the royal commission, we announced we are setting up a special prosecutor and I also announced that I am giving IBAC the follow-the-money powers this year, not next year.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Broadmeadows can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Broadmeadows withdrew from chamber.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your advice on relevance. This question was around the parliamentary pension of former members – a very specific question. The Premier has gone nowhere near dealing with that question.

Anthony Carbines: On the point of order, Speaker, *Rulings from the Chair* says, 'Raising the same point of order … each day simply wastes the time of the house' – Speaker Plowman.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has only been on his feet for a short time. The Premier to continue. I do not uphold the point of order.

Ben CARROLL: I will follow due process. This is a report that was 10 years in the making, and I will follow due process.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier is robotically reading his talking points but is not dealing with the substance of the question as to whether or not former crooked members get the parliamentary pension.

The SPEAKER: I will repeat my rulings in relation to this, as I have done many times. I cannot tell the Premier how to answer a question. The Premier has concluded his answer.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:19): Will the Premier change the rules and strip any former member who is the subject of adverse findings by a royal commission of their taxpayer-funded pension?

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Speaker, I say that the member is seeking an opinion and it is hypothetical. It is out of order, the question that is being put by the member.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the Leader of the House's point of order.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:19): I have called the royal commission. Let them get on and do their work. Let us not pre-empt what they will do.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question was very clearly around whether the Premier is willing to change the rules around the parliamentary pension. It was not about any other matter. If he does not want to change the rules, he can say that, but that was the question.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I do not uphold the point of order.

Ministers statements: family violence

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (14:20): Family violence is the number one law and order issue facing Victoria. In Victoria there are 281 family violence incidents every day. That is one every 5 minutes. But these shocking numbers do not tell the full story, because behind every statistic is a person, and every single one of them deserves to be heard, believed, supported and protected. That is why the Carroll Labor government is delivering further reforms to better protect victim-survivors of family and gendered violence and to hold perpetrators to account. These reforms have been shaped by people who have lived it – people who have experienced violence and survived it. I want to acknowledge every one of them for sharing their experiences and helping us to build a better system. These reforms are also shaped by the memory of the women and children whose lives have been taken by family and gendered violence.

We must never lose sight of why this work matters, but Victorians also need to know that progress cannot be taken for granted. These reforms are under threat from a One Nation–Liberal coalition government. Comments such as 'family violence is a two-way street' and 'women should just leave' –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on standing order 118, I agree with the Attorney, and to say the opposition in any way has anything to do with those comments is absolutely shameful.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, member for Brighton.

Sonya KILKENNY: These comments are unacceptable. They are not befitting anyone who seeks to govern in this state, and those who fail to call out this kind of rhetoric should never hold high office. So I say to those opposite: stand up, speak out and show leadership.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I do again renew my point of order on standing order 118. I just called it out, and the Attorney is simply reading her talking points.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Brighton, if you continue to not direct your comments through the Chair, you will be removed from the chamber. There is no point of order.

Sonya KILKENNY: Member for Brighton, this is not about you. When it comes to family violence, silence is not leadership. Victorians deserve leadership.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Speaker, you previously ruled that the member for Brighton go through you, and then immediately the minister went through –

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, member for Eildon.

Road maintenance

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:23): My question is to the Premier. In the two years he was minister for roads, the now Premier cut the roads maintenance budget collectively by $214 million. Why should Victorians have any confidence he will now do anything to fix the parlous state of our roads?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:24): I reject entirely the premise of the question. One billion dollars has been invested in our roads, and a civil engineer is in charge of it.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:24): Today several motorists shredded tyres and damaged rims due to potholes on the Calder Highway near Gisborne. Yesterday it was dozens due to massive potholes at Bunyip on the Princes Highway. Last month the same happened on the Hume and Goulburn Valley highways. Why should Victorians have to suffer appalling roads because $15 billion was siphoned into the pockets of bikies and criminals while the Premier sat around the cabinet table?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Premier) (14:25): Unlike those opposite, we are not about admiring potholes, we are about fixing them.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Lowan withdrew from chamber.

Ministers statements: gender equality

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (14:25): This side of the house knows that when women thrive families, communities and workplaces benefit. This is why we have made significant investments to ensure, for example, that women have access to health care. It is why we have invested to boost women's workforce participation. It is why we have invested at record levels in women's safety. Family violence takes many forms, some overt but some less so. Coercive control is an insidious behaviour that leads to women feeling isolated and living in fear. This is why we are making coercive control a standalone offence, to make it clear that this behaviour is a crime and those found guilty of it will face serious penalties. We are also ensuring that victim-survivors do not face discrimination just because they took steps to keep themselves safe.

Victoria has led the nation in family violence reform and in progressing gender equality. We have made gains in women's representation in senior leadership roles and in male-dominated industries. But the truth is we still have a lot more work to do. Reporting by the commissioner for gender equality in the public sector has found that too many women continue to experience sexual harassment at work. We know the gender pay gap sadly persists, and that is why the Carroll Labor government remains committed to the important work that Victoria has been driving. Labor will always protect gender equality and stand with victim-survivors of family violence. We do not make excuses for family violence like One Nation does. We do not make excuses. We do not support scrapping paid parental leave. Labor backs it every step of the way. We do not support scrapping paid parental leave. The real question, though, is: does the Leader of the Opposition?

Constituency questions

Sandringham electorate

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:28): (1738) My constituency question is to the Minister for Health. When will the Labor government invest in the new MRI machine that our Sandringham Hospital is already licensed for so that locals have access to MRI services in our community? Our Sandringham Hospital, back in 2025, was granted a Medicare-eligible MRI licence by the federal

government. This was great news for our community. An MRI machine at the Sandringham Hospital would make life easier for locals and enable them to access quality health care within our community. But the state Labor government has not funded the MRI machine itself. The hospital has the licence to enable it to provide bulk-billed MRI services to community members – yet no machine. Not one of the government's three health ministers in the past six months has been able to answer this question at all, and I ask the new minister to actually take real action and invest in the MRI machine that our hospital desperately needs.

Bass electorate

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:29): (1739) My question is to the Minister for Environment. I have met the Warneet Fishing Club on numerous occasions and have always been impressed by the passion, dedication and energy of its members, who are committed to delivering the very best outcomes for their village and community. Under the outstanding leadership of president Carly Edwards and her committee extraordinaire, the club has grown from 38 to 126 members and provides a family-friendly, inclusive and all-abilities environment through fishing, education and community engagement activities. Supported by organisations including coastal villages resilience support and the Warneet–Blind Bight CFA, the club is exploring opportunities at the Warneet Recreation Reserve to establish a shared accessible facility for its growing membership and community programs. Minister, who within the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action can the club, the committee of management and local community groups engage with directly and meet onsite to discuss facility parameters, upgrade opportunities and potential expansion so they can better understand what is possible and develop future plans, a master plan and funding pathways?

Ovens Valley electorate

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:30): (1740) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport, who this week is the member for Eltham. What can be done within the public transport capacity to assist Rosina Pellizzoni from Myrtleford and so many of her friends and neighbours who need local transport around Myrtleford for normal regular activities like shopping, bingo and sporting events? A community bus is desperately required to offer basic transport options around town because taxis usually do not exist in Myrtleford. Living in regional Victoria should not be a one-way ticket to isolation, and the people of Myrtleford deserve basic local public transport to live a healthy and active life.

Wendouree electorate

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (14:31): (1741) My constituency question is for the Minister for Rural and Regional Development. When will the Frank Bourke Oval redevelopment be opened? I am proud that the Carroll Labor government is delivering a major upgrade to the Frank Bourke Oval in North Ballarat, supported by a $5 million investment from the Victorian government and funding from the City of Ballarat. The new pavilion will provide modern and accessible change rooms, umpire facilities, community meeting spaces and a kitchen, canteen and bar, creating a welcoming home for local sport and community events. Importantly, these upgrades will support the North Ballarat Football & Netball Club, strengthen local cricket and help grow participation in women's and community sport for generations to come. As part of the broader Ballarat major events precinct development, this project is about more than buildings; it is about investing in people, creating opportunities for local athletes, attracting visitors and cementing Ballarat's reputation as one of regional Victoria's premier sporting destinations.

Brighton electorate

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:32): (1742) My constituency question is to the Premier, and I ask: when will the Premier step in to stop Lindsay Street, Brighton, being wrecked because of Labor's planning attack on Bayside? Residents across Bayside know that Labor plans to wreck our community. Labor has approved an 8-kilometre-long development zone from Brighton to Sandringham. The

activity centre will allow towers up to 16 storeys high to be built in Bayside, with six-storey developments in residential streets. A number of our residential streets are already under attack, with developers proposing to build an $18 million six-storey tower housing 25 apartments in quiet, residential Lindsay Street. The Liberal Party have made clear that we will rip up Labor's activity centre plans in communities that do not want them, like Bayside. Residents are outraged that Labor will try to ram through a small number of developments before the election. Residents have said about the Lindsay Street proposal that they are disgusted, it is totally inappropriate and completely out of character, and these controls may all but destroy some of the most beautiful suburbs. Vote Liberal to protect our community.

Bayswater electorate

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (14:33): (1743) My question is to the Minister for Education. When will we be able to officially open the upgraded facilities at Bayswater South Primary School? It was an election commitment in 2022, with over $11 million to upgrade all of the major classroom areas at Bayswater South Primary School, a wonderful local school led by the wonderful team of Mr Mottrom and Mr Zielinski. I am very grateful for the community's patience while we have got on with this important work. I have seen some of the first shots of the upgrades and they look absolutely incredible. They have been part of the nearly $100 million of upgrades we have delivered to local schools across the two iterations of the Bayswater electorate since I was first elected in 2018. I look forward to the minister's response.

Rowville electorate

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (14:34): (1744) My question is to the Minister for Youth, and I ask: when will the state Labor government fund vital upgrades to scout halls in the Rowville electorate? The Heaney Park Scouts regional facility is one that can be used by Scout groups across a wider area, but it desperately needs a modern, safe space and much-needed improvements. The 1st Rowville Scout hall is a community-based hall used for community events and playgroups, and it desperately needs an upgrade to maintain and modernise this dual-use facility. In addition, 1st Wantirna South in Tyner Road desperately needs a funding upgrade to ensure the Cubs and Scouts have a safe place to hold their activities and to keep their gear. These upgrades are strongly supported by the Liberal candidate for Rowville Max Williams, who is working hard with the Shadow Minister for Youth to support the scouting movement.

Point Cook electorate

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (14:35): (1745) My question is for the Minister for Police, and my question is: can the minister provide an update on the latest information on the construction progress –

The SPEAKER: Member for Point Cook, an update is not a question.

Mathew HILAKARI: Can the minister provide information on the construction progress of the Point Cook police station on Point Cook Homestead Road?

Members interjecting.

Mathew HILAKARI: I thank my colleagues next to me. There has been great progress on the police station down in Point Cook. The windows are in, the solar panels are up and the building is going in leaps and bounds. My community, the community that I represent, cannot wait to see it open. So I look forward to hearing what progress is being made on the police station and what the minister can provide.

Morwell electorate

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (14:35): (1746) My question is to the Premier, and the information I seek is whether the Premier will admit that coal-fired power has a crucial role to play in securing

Victoria's energy grid. Labor has had 11 years to prepare for the transition away from coal-fired power, but repeated inaction and mismanagement of the grid means Victoria is in a precarious position. With the planned closure of Yallourn power station in 2028, the Victorian Auditor-General has stated the risk of a disorderly energy transition is now almost certain. The Auditor-General also says Labor's current pipeline of generation and battery projects will not be enough to offset Yallourn's closure from mid-2028. The loss of Yallourn's power generation without significant alternative supply also means power bills will skyrocket, and Victorians already doing it tough with the cost of living will be in a further world of hurt.

The SPEAKER: Member for Morwell, I will give you a chance to rephrase your constituency question to be a question, not an action.

Martin CAMERON: The information that I seek is: when will the Premier admit coal-fired power has a crucial role to play in securing Victoria's energy grid?

Preston electorate

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (14:37): (1747) My question is for the Minister for Environment, and my question is: how does the current scale of Forest Fire Management Victoria operations compare to the previous VicForests commercial timber operations in terms of the annual volumes of pulp log and sawlog that ultimately make their way out of state forests or, if that data is not available, in terms of the hectares of state forest subject to vegetation removal? I note there is particular interest in Preston and Reservoir about the Central Highlands ecosystems in particular, which are obviously closest to our part of the world, so any information that the minister's team could provide about that geographical area specifically would be greatly appreciated. Finally, I have noted that the Liberals have said a few negative things about our public servants today, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the fantastic Victorian public service team who continue to manage our forestry transition, including the amazing Deb Hall under the leadership of Beth Jones, but also including Andrew Waller, Jeff Svigos and, until recently, Rosita Dalla Rosa and Ross Potter – all fantastic Victorian public servants. We are grateful for their work on Victoria's forest policies.

The SPEAKER: The procedure office team has been updating outstanding items in the questions and responses database. This is obviously to reflect the new portfolios that have just been announced and the Council ministers representing Assembly ministers. As of midday today there are still about 60 matters to be redirected in the database.

Tim Read: On a point of order, Speaker, on that, I have got about 14 unanswered questions, and I will just email those numbers to the Clerk.

The SPEAKER: If you could hand your list to the clerks, they will follow it up.

Committees

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Alert Digest No. 10

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:39): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 10 of 2026, on the following bills, together with their appendices:

Cannabis Legislation Plebiscite Bill 2026

Corrections Amendment Bill 2026 – house amendments

Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2026

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Facilitating Timely Reporting) Bill 2026

Multicultural Victoria Amendment Bill 2026

Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2026

Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026.

Ordered to be published.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 – Order under s 17B granting a licence over Frankston North Public Park and Recreation Reserve

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission – Special report on Operation Richmond – Released on 5 August 2026

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

Ballarat – C266

Banyule – GC259

Bass Coast – C182

Cardinia – C283

Casey – GC259

Darebin – GC259

Glen Eira – C277

Latrobe – C150

Melbourne – C492, C502

Mitchell – C162

Yarra – C271, C273, C291, C336

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 73, 96, 108, 109, 110

Documents under s 16B in relation to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2026* – Ministerial Order No 1514 – Order Amending Ministerial Order No 1228 – Victorian Institute of Teaching Registration Fees

Wrongs Act 1958 – Notice of scale and fees and costs for referrals of medical questions to Medical Panels under Part VBA *(Gazette G30, 23 July 2026)*.

Bills

Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2026

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (14:40): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2026 without amendment.

Dangerous Goods Transport Bill 2026

Education and Training Reform Amendment Bill 2026

Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2026

Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill 2026

Royal assent

The SPEAKER (14:40): I inform the house that the Governor gave royal assent to the Dangerous Goods Transport Bill 2026, the Education and Training Reform Amendment Bill 2026, the Health

Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2026 and the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill 2026.

Multicultural Victoria Amendment Bill 2026

Appropriation

The SPEAKER (14:41): I have received a message from the Governor recommending an appropriation for the purposes of the Multicultural Victoria Amendment Bill 2026.

Business of the house

Program

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Artificial Intelligence and the Digital Economy, Minister for Major Events, Minister for Medical Research, Minister for Racing, Minister for Economic Development) (14:41): With bated breath we have been waiting, and I am pleased to move:

> That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on 13 August 2026:
>
> Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026
>
> Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026
>
> Multicultural Victoria Amendment Bill 2026
>
> Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2026
>
> Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026.

The business program is of course about doing what is right for all Victorians, because the Carroll Labor government will govern for all Victorians. We have had a big week. It is an important government business program this week as always, and we have some important matters in the business program that members are looking forward to contributing to. They will be debating the Multicultural Victoria Amendment Bill 2026 to establish Multicultural Victoria, replacing the Victorian Multicultural Commission and providing new direction and a stronger voice for multicultural and multifaith communities. It is census day today, and we know that Victorians come from some 300 different ancestries, speak more than 290 languages and practice almost 200 faiths. On our side of the house, we support Victorian families from all culture and faith backgrounds – I am sure that is the case for most members in this place – and know that they make a substantial and valuable contribution to the state of Victoria. We will not be doing any deals, though, with One Nation or Pauline Hanson. We will not be part of any wacky coalitions with those on the outside who want to cause division and debate in the community.

James Newbury: On a point of order, I may be mistaken, Speaker, but I understand this is the debate on the government business program.

The SPEAKER: What is your point of order, member for Brighton?

James Newbury: Relevance.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the House, come back to the government business program.

Anthony CARBINES: Our government supports multicultural Victoria. We say it loudly, we say it proudly and we show it with our deeds in our investment in multicultural communities, our investment in faith-based schools and faith-based health services and our contribution to community organisations and volunteers and the work that they do in our sporting clubs and in our volunteer and service clubs – the effort and the work that they put in, the ties that they have with their communities over very many generations and the contributions that they make. The reforms that we bring into this place on multicultural Victoria go again to strengthening and responding to the needs of multicultural

communities and how they see themselves and would like to be advocated for and have their interests advanced in this place by our government.

We will also be cracking down on organised crime, making it an offence for an adult to recruit a child to commit a serious crime. The Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026 is a direct response to organised crime groups that prey on vulnerable kids in our community. These laws make it an offence for an adult to recruit a child to commit a serious crime, regardless of whether the criminal activity is actually carried out by that child. These are tough issues to work through – they are complex – to make sure that the courts can hold offenders to account and that police are able to bring charges and evidence to bear before the courts, but we are confident that the legislation coming before the house achieves those aims. It is insidious behaviour; we have zero tolerance for it. It harms vulnerable kids, it sets them on a destructive path and it makes us all feel less safe.

The Carroll Labor government understands that community safety is our number one priority. That is why we will also be introducing new workplace protection orders to protect retail and transport workers. Violence, threats and intimidation directed at Victorian workers doing their job are unacceptable. The bill creates a new workplace protection order scheme to protect retail and transport workers. I want to thank on behalf of everyone our retail and transport workers, remembering that retail work is not just for people who have put in decades of service representing the businesses that they work for and supporting consumers; it is also where a lot of people get their first start in life in the workforce. Our Premier was one of them, at Kmart, but so many other young people get their first start at taking responsibility, getting out there and learning through on-the-job training. We want to make sure they are protected too, that their experiences are good experiences.

Unfortunately, we have seen time and again people being disrespected in their workplaces, and we cannot have that, particularly for young people who need the protection and the support of our laws, of our Parliament, of their fellow colleagues in the workplace and of those who employ them. The orders are flexible. They can be used to ban people from the workplace. They can impose other conditions from a court that they consider necessary to protect Victorian workers. We understand you should feel safe at work, you should be valued at work and you should be able to return home from work feeling safe and feeling good about the contribution that you have made through the day or the night. We want to make sure that these laws are passed this Parliament. There will be further reforms that we are bringing forward to this Parliament in other legislation. I commend a very full program, and I make sure also that, unlike the Liberal–One Nation coalition on the other side – *(Time expired)*

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:47): I rise to speak on the government business program, and I do start by saying that, unfortunately, you will perhaps notice throughout my contributions this week a lessening of the sunny disposition that I normally possess in the chamber, because of a broken toe. I do want to let you know before I commence my first contribution of the day that that sunniness will be a little less than normal, but we will persevere nevertheless. I apologise in advance.

We will not be supporting the government business program, because we have seen week in and week out that the government business program that is proposed and what this house does are two different things. We see changes on a day-to-day basis that by Thursday mean that what was proposed is not the substance of what is delivered in this chamber, and there are things in this chamber that we should be debating, that should have been included in the government business program. I do say, and I have noted this before, there were no private members bills accommodated. We are nearly at the end of the term, and private members bills have not been accommodated at any point throughout this term. The Leader of the House spoke in some great detail – some might say foreshadowing debate, but I will leave that there – on the workplace protection orders. On this side of the house we recall moving amendments to a bill in November last year. We recall only last week proposing a private members bill on that same subject matter. Had we had time in this chamber, which is not afforded through this government business program, we could have seen changes in law that would not have led to the delay on issues like we are seeing with workplace protection orders.

We are seeing important proposed legislation that has been drafted not only by the opposition; we saw the Greens today move a private members bill. Without speaking to the substance of what they proposed, it is an important mechanism that should be afforded but which has not been afforded time in the government business program. There are a number of bills in that regard. We see notice given today for a number of matters in the Attorney-General's portfolio area, for which private members bills have already been drafted and attempted to be moved in this chamber.

The list now is very, very long of bills that have been drafted, have been moved in this chamber and have been denied by way of the government using their numbers to block any debate and then later come back into the chamber to say that they are considering legislating in that way, oftentimes perhaps a year after the fact. Workplace protection orders are one example. Suppression orders are another example. If this government business program enabled debate for private members bills, that would not be the case. The list is now very, very long of legislative proposals that the opposition has put forward that have not seen change.

When it comes to the government business program, it is not just private members bills that have not been afforded time; we have seen a government not use its time in this chamber wisely and at times debate as few as two bills in substance in a week, and now we have five because the government has so poorly mismanaged its time. Throughout my time as Manager of Opposition Business I have raised that very point in the government business program debate. We are now seeing additional bills in the last days. After today there are only eight sitting days left in theory – who would know – of this Parliament, but the government business program has been shown over that time to be very poorly mismanaged. As I started by saying, what we move today will most likely not be what we consider by the end of the week. That is why we will not be supporting the government business program today.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (14:52): It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon and make a contribution in favour of this government business program. It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Brighton. To no surprise, the opposition will not be supporting the government business program this week, as they do not every single other week. As I often say, but particularly this week, it is incredibly disappointing that we have no level of bipartisanship in respect of supporting this government business program considering the incredibly important content that is on it. Every day in this chamber when in government is a gift and incredibly important, no more so than this week, when we have the opportunity to debate legislation that will fundamentally change the lives of hundreds of thousands of Victorians.

It is a packed government business program. There are five bills on it. I will pick up the member for Brighton's point as he limps out of the chamber. On the use of time in this place, he made several comments about the government not supporting private members bills. The Liberals, at least in this term, have taken a leaf out of the political book or the strategy book of the Greens political party. Whenever there is an issue and the opposition know that the government is working to create legislation and create a bill to try and fix the issue, they run into this place and throw on the table a private members bill, which is often ill thought out, not drafted, and of course we oppose it. Then they take the opportunity to go on social media and criticise the government for not supporting their ill-thought-out private members bill, which a lot of the time has not even been drafted.

To go to the contents of this week's government business program and the work that we will be doing in this chamber for all Victorians, the Multicultural Victoria Amendment Bill 2026 is a piece of legislation that is quite close to the hearts of people in my community of Tarneit, being one of the most multicultural places and fastest growing areas anywhere in Australia. I know the member for Greenvale next to me is in the same boat with his local community. I know how important this piece of legislation will be to them as well.

Nathan Lambert interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: And Preston. I want to speak particularly about the outer suburbs. Our multicultural communities are what makes those places great – the diversity of places like Tarneit and like Wyndham, with significant South Asian and Middle Eastern communities, who are here to work hard and to provide for their families. The Labor Party, this Carroll Labor government, will always support those communities and will most certainly not stand by and allow the demonising of those communities by particular political actors out there that are trying to get in here.

The Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2026 – we know how incredibly important that is. We have been, over the last four years, working feverishly out in Wyndham to deliver a new emergency department at the Werribee Mercy Hospital, which will double the capacity of patients being able to be seen in that emergency department. But with a new emergency department and more capacity, you need more health workers, because it is no good having a great big emergency department that all of Wyndham can be seen in if it is not staffed. So that piece of legislation is incredibly important to my community as well.

We have got the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026, which particularly targets the recruitment of children by gangs for criminal activity, and of course the Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026, because every worker, regardless of where they work, deserves to go to work, come home and be safe. I commend the government business program to the house.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (14:57): I rise in support of the Manager of Opposition Business as we oppose the government business program this week. Over the entire year we have come into the chamber mostly with very light weeks when we have bills to debate, and the last few weeks that we have come in here we have had four and now five bills to debate on the program. The issue there is that we love getting up on our feet on this side of the chamber and participating on all bills that come through the chamber. I think we showed last sitting week that the bills had to chop and change very, very quickly. There were a lot of members in the chamber that wanted to get up and speak on certain bills. Sometimes members in the chamber do not want to speak on certain bills, but they need to have the right to be able to choose to get up. I know I enjoy getting up and speaking on all bills, but when we are chopping and changing so rapidly between bills it does make us very time-poor to be able to prepare. I know the member for Shepparton spends a lot of time with the bills to make sure that her contributions are in line with what the bills are about and to be able to articulate what the opposition's points are to hold the government to account. To do that and then have a bill just stopped and move on to the next one can be very frustrating at times.

I notice on the government business program this week that we have the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026, and that is a really important bill that I am sure most members will want to get up and speak on. I know it is in the house today supposedly so we can get up and speak on it, but it is very hard for a lot of our members from regional Victoria that do want to get up and actually talk about the impacts of what this bill will mean for our communities. We all want to be on our feet talking about that, but again, with five bills in the house, it is more than likely that we will get a certain time to do it and it will swap again. That is the point. We have so many bills in the house that what we perceive we are going to be talking on for the week comes in very short and sharp timeframes.

The Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026 is also another one that is important for a lot of areas around Victoria – to be able to get up and talk about energy and resources, for one, and to make sure that the legislation that we are putting in place is supporting the future of our energy sector.

On the multicultural one, the Leader of the House got up, and I was reading between the lines but he was sort of intimating that the multicultural fraternity down here in the city is maybe not as important to us members in the regions. We also have a wonderful multicultural community down in the Latrobe Valley. We have a huge variance of multicultural societies and people who actually love living in the

Latrobe Valley. For us to be able to get up and talk on a multicultural bill and be able to talk about the multicultural people that are in our community and the important role that they do have for the fabric of the way the Latrobe Valley is run – we have a lot of people in our health workforce that come from right across the world. To be able to get up and talk on the Multicultural Victoria Amendment Bill 2026 will be a pleasure.

We also have the Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2026. Just talking about the health component of that, that goes hand in hand. We can have these new hospitals and wonderful hospitals, but we do need to be able to staff them. And the Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026 I feel is nearly the most important one to get right, to protect our family members when they are standing at the front of house doing their working role.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (15:02): Don't those opposite sound just like Goldilocks? First there are not enough bills, then there are too many bills. I would like to remind them that this is not their house, and I think the bills are just right. The bills that we have here to debate this week reflect that the government is delivering what the community are asking for. It shows that our government listens and acts. A good example of that is that in going around and speaking to people about the rego rebate, so many people have said that they will be using that money for winter power bills. Having on the list this week the Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026, which is going to modernise and expand the Victorian energy upgrades program, we know is so important for communities who want to see those power bills come down. It is one of the things that people are raising with me when I am doorknocking, and our government has done the work to make sure that we can continue that downward trend through increasing renewables. I am really happy to see that on the list.

Another concern that is raised with members is also reflected in this bill, and that is around young people committing crime and the fact that they are being induced to that by recruiters. Those recruiters need to have really serious consequences, and that is why we have on the list this week the work to make sure that those people face up to life imprisonment. There is a lot more that we are doing around that, as has been discussed in the chamber previously and by earlier speakers today around changes to bail, adult courts and the like. And that is not to exclude, of course, the violence reduction unit, which is doing really important work in our community.

For people who do end up on the wrong side of the law or who are getting involved in things they should not be, that also has an impact on our health system and our emergency departments, which are doing such a fantastic job. I had reason to be in one recently with my daughter after she fell off some play equipment. I marvelled at what the nurses and doctors were able to do, the skill and the compassion that they showed. We need to make sure that for patients and for nurses and midwives those ratios are right, and so I am really happy to see that we have, as part of the government business program this week, work to increase ratios of nurses and midwives to patients and 260 additional full-time nurses. That is absolutely fantastic.

Of course something that the community has been speaking about and feeling very deeply in this past week but also earlier is around crime against retail workers, harassment of retail workers, stalking and the like. It is simply not acceptable, when people go to work to raise funds for their family and they are providing a service to the community, that people would seek to harm them. That is why I am really proud to see the workplace protection orders included in the government business program this week.

You can see I am going through some of the biggest topics that we talk about with our constituents and that we hear from community, and I am really proud to see those reflected in the government's business program. Included in that are the multicultural amendments that we are making to make sure that the community voice and community advocacy of multicultural communities are wedded to policy and grants and that they are not separate, because we recognise and are putting in action the fact that there needs to be more than just advocacy. Advocacy needs to have a clearer path to directing

government action, which is what Multicultural Victoria, the body that we will be discussing this week, seeks to do – give community a clear voice. And giving community a clear voice can be I think a good summary of the government business program this week, and I look forward to debating the bills in the house.

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (15:07): I rise to speak to the government business program, which we will be opposing, as the member for Brighton has already spoken to, as well as the member for Morwell. It is the case that the government has not allowed debate on these private members bills, and any wonder – when we hear from the Greens today, and certainly there have been private members bills that we have sought to move in the house – because they are copying our homework. The government are wanting to introduce their laws after we have already introduced them, a good example being today when they introduced the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026. That is one that we sought to move I think in November last year – it was a long time ago. The Workplace Protection Orders Bill 2026 is one that we moved last week, which the government voted against and now are wanting to debate this week, when we could have enacted it already, even with a delayed start date from them in their bill. So there is this flip-flopping from the government of 'Will we decide? Will we choose to do it? Will we just copy and paste? Well, what's the Leader of the Opposition doing? Maybe we'll just copy what she does. Oh, yeah, let's do a royal commission too, even though it's going to be a farce. Oh, let's do our own workplace protection orders bill, even though it'll have a delayed start date.' And this is the issue at hand, where there is just this incompetency from the government, and that is why we are opposing the government business program today.

Looking at the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026, if I can speak to that for a moment without pre-empting debate, the glaring omission in this one is that there is a loophole that is created. There is the offence that applies to adults who recruit, but what about when adults recruit a child to do the recruitment for them? That has not been thought about, that has not been put into the bill, that has not been considered in what is happening today on our streets as the crime crisis surges across Victoria. I mean, what an utter mess from this government that they would not even consider this. And we look at, again, the crime that is hitting our streets, that they are trying to tidy up with three weeks to go in the third last week of Parliament before we go to caretaker period, and this is again –

Anthony Cianflone: My point of order, Speaker, is on the member for Warrandyte foreshadowing the debate on the bill before the chamber. We are talking about the government business program, not debating the substance of each respective bill.

The SPEAKER: Yes. I remind the member for Warrandyte to be very cautious about pre-empting debate.

Nicole WERNER: Seeing as I had moved on from talking about the specific bill – I am glad everyone was listening – this is the case at hand, that this government do not know what they are doing. It is minutes to midnight, and they are trying to legislate to hang on to their lives, hang on to their seats. This is the truth: we have a legislative agenda on this side that has been gagged time and time again. We have moved on this side private members bills to ban machetes – not once, not twice but five times over – that this government voted down until they finally legislated, when it was too little, too late. Again they voted it down when we moved to make machetes a prohibited weapon, only then to follow thereafter. They voted against us when we tried to reinstate the offence of breaching bail, and I need not even speak about how much that is an issue on our streets today. We look at just this weekend past, the tragedies that occurred just last week, and why it is so imperative that these bills happen now – not later, not in a delayed fashion but when we bring them to the floor of Parliament. When we look at what has happened in the tragic scenario with youth crime spiralling out of control, with the brutal killing of Van Viet Truong allegedly at the hands of young offenders, this is why it is so important that the opposition should be able to introduce bills to be adopted into law. The

government is lagging and delaying and has a history of lagging and delaying, and that is why we oppose the government business program today.

If I am to speak to the Victorian Multicultural Commission, it is now being put back as a statutory body so it is finally independent, as it should be, instead of it sitting under the Department of Premier and Cabinet. It has actually returned to what it was under the Liberal government. This is why we oppose this government. We have got a four-year appointment, on the eve of the caretaker period, that the government has already started advertising as a $400,000 role. This is what this government is up to.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (49): Juliana Addison, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (27): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Ashley Ryan

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (15:18): I want to begin today by sending my best wishes to Birralee Primary School's much loved and admired but retiring principal Ashley Ryan. Mr Ryan started with the department back in 1972 under the old studentship program. He has been the school principal of Birralee since October 1999. The school has been in a situation in recent times where it was down to 150 students, but he actually believed in Birralee. It has now got more than 600 students, and it is one of the pre-eminent schools in the Manningham area. Seventeen years ago he introduced the phonics English language program into Birralee. The improvements in students were remarkable. Phonics, as you know, has only become compulsory in Victorian primary schools this year. What sets Ashley apart is his leadership style and his commitment to children. He connects with the students and their parents. He is well loved by staff and the broader community. Since he has been principal Birralee has grown not only in student numbers but in confidence, outcomes and its reputation. It is widely now known, as I said, as a school of choice, and a very popular one at that. Congratulations and best wishes to Birralee's retiring hardworking and much-loved principal Ashley Ryan.

Betty Brown

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (15:19): On a final note, my best wishes for the 100th birthday of Mrs Betty Brown of Lower Templestowe. Thank you to her daughters, her family, her carers and the staff at Templestowe Views aged care facility. She was a wonderful inspiration last week when I caught up with her and all her carers, and I send my love and best wishes to her.

Heatherton Football & Netball Club

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (15:20): Congratulations to Heatherton Football & Netball Club on their 2026 sportsman's luncheon and sponsors day and on their most successful home-and-away

campaign for 20 years. I would like to acknowledge club president Justin Reynolds and all those people and organisations who have made the club's success possible.

Friends of Braeside Park

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (15:20): Also, congratulations to the Friends of Braeside Park on their very successful community event to mark the 100th anniversary of Phar Lap's birthday. Phar Lap is one of Australia's most iconic sports legends and has a historical connection to Braeside, where he was trained in the 1930s prior to his departure to the United States. It was my pleasure to join with president Judith Sise, volunteers and friends to unveil the aluminium horse sculpture at the Phar Lap Track, accompanied by seven painted interpretive panels on the cultural, environmental and industrial history of the area. Friends of Braeside Park is a long-established community volunteers group founded in 1989 working closely with Parks Victoria to protect and enhance Braeside Park. The group does fantastic work, which includes environmental and cultural heritage projects and community education, working together with other local organisations, including men's sheds, historical societies and local businesses. Congratulations and thank you. Well done to all.

Battle of Long Tan commemoration

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (15:21): I encourage all Victorians to join Vietnam veterans to commemorate Long Tan on 18 August. Long Tan was a fierce battle in a rubber plantation that saw significant loss of life of Australians against enormous odds. Take a moment next Tuesday to pay tribute to all of our Vietnam vets who served and stood tall for our communities.

Electricity infrastructure

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (15:21): I want to again raise the absolute disrespect shown to our regional communities by the Carroll Labor government forcing solar factories into local farming communities. The bloody-minded approach of 'renewable energy at any cost' has driven local communities in the Ovens Valley and neighbouring electorates of Euroa and Shepparton to despair, as planning permits are issued at the Minister for Planning's whim, who seems to make decisions based on self-interest rather than good planning evidence. A Liberal–Nationals government will review the planning rules and regulations around solar factory locations, which will consider community impacts. Our communities, like Meadow Creek, Dederang and others, deserve the respect of proper consultation, not a sham approach that is a tick-and-flick exercise that invariably ends up with a proponent getting the planning permit while the community gets shafted again. Renewable energy has a place in Victoria's energy mix, but it should not come at the expense of ruining regional livelihoods. Near Glenrowan there are 3 million solar panels spread over 3000 hectares. This is a concrete jungle on steroids. While local communities are ignored, many solar factories are created, and then the cashed-up landowners move off farm and live happily ever after away from the eyesore, while neighbours are trapped in not a field of dreams but a sea of PV. Local councils are shut out, neighbours are ignored and communities are destroyed. A review of the planning laws and transparency is what we will deliver.

QHub Geelong

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (15:23): Recently I held a members statement competition with students in my electorate. The winner was August Messer of Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College, and the runner-up was Nullah Farey-Williams of Newcomb Secondary College, who are both here in the gallery today. This is August's winning statement.

Geelong QHub plays a prominent role in supporting our local community and enabling young LGBTQIA+ community members to feel safe and seen. Now more than ever it is so important that every young person has access to mental health and wellbeing support, and I am proud that the budget supports this through the continued funding of this important program. QHub provides a range of support services for young people across Geelong, including peer support, community connection programs and access to wellbeing resources. These services help create safe and inclusive

environments where young people can access support close to home. Continued investment in programs like QHub ensures that the local organisations can continue to deliver services that respond directly to the needs of our community. For many young people and families across Geelong and the Surf Coast, having access to local and specialised support services can make a significant difference in improving wellbeing and reducing barriers in accessing help. I thank Drummond Street Services, Cafs and Wellways for their ongoing support of QHub, as well as the incredible staff and volunteers who make the Geelong community a more inclusive and safe space.

Country Fire Authority Montrose and Chirnside Park brigades

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (15:24): Our CFA firefighters across district 13 are tremendous. I wish to pay tribute to three members of Montrose CFA fire brigade and Chirnside Park CFA fire brigade for their exceptional longstanding service to our community and Victoria as volunteer firefighters. Congratulations, Robert Earney, on an exceptional and inspirational 55 years of dedicated service as a firefighter at Montrose CFA fire brigade.

Rob is a former captain of Montrose CFA and has served on the brigade management team and as Knox group officer, all while running a small business in Montrose. Rob has the community at the heart of everything that he does and has helped mentor new members and develop a strong culture at the brigade. Congratulations, Peter Carew, on an amazing 45 years of dedicated service as a CFA firefighter. At Montrose fire brigade Peter has held numerous BMT roles and also served as Knox group officer. Peter was recognised for his service during the 2009 Victorian bushfires and the 2019–20 bushfire emergency with the National Emergency Medal and is always prepared to respond to emergencies. Congratulations, Jeff Forrest, of Chirnside Park CFA fire brigade on an exceptional 50 years of service to the CFA. Jeff was a founding member of the Chirnside Park fire brigade 11 years ago, is a former brigade captain and is a wonderful asset to the brigade and our local community. Jeff is still part of the BMT today and a life member of the CFA. Thanks, Rob, Peter and Jeff, for your exceptional service to the CFA and to your families for their wonderful support.

Ilinden

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (15:26): 2 August was the anniversary of Ilinden and the subject of week-long celebrations by Macedonian Australians living in the electorate of Thomastown. In the words of a Macedonian Australian, Aneta:

> Ilinden remains one of the most significant commemorative dates for Macedonians worldwide, marking the 1903 Ilinden Uprising against the Ottoman Empire and a long-standing commitment to self-determination, cultural identity and democratic participation. For Macedonian Australians, it is both an historical commemoration and an important expression of community identity and continuity.

Although the Kruševo Republic, as it was called, was short lived, the significance of Ilinden has lived on and is universal. It honours the courage, sacrifice and the determination of ordinary people and their right to decide their own future – a people who refused to surrender their language, culture and history. For more than a century Macedonian Australians have enriched Victoria's social, cultural and economic life. They have built churches, businesses, community organisations and sport clubs. Their contributions live on in the communities they have built, the institutions they sustain and the generations they have raised. This success is also a testament to the success of multicultural Victoria. As Macedonian Australians celebrated Ilinden on 2 August, I acknowledge their enduring contribution to Victoria and wish everyone a proud and meaningful Ilinden: Среќен Илинден.

State election

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (15:27): Soon, in just 100 days, Victorians finally get to get rid of this second unelected Premier and a Labor government that has let them down time and again. The good news is that the Liberals and Nationals have a plan to deliver a fresh start for Victoria, and you are going to want to hear it. We have a plan to lower the cost of living by cutting taxes on schools, GPs and stamp duty for first-home buyers, to lower land tax and to axe the emergency services levy.

We have a plan for safer communities, with 3000 more police; tougher bail and sentencing with 'break bail, face jail' and adult time for adult crime; and reopening the 40 police stations Labor has closed. We have a plan for $5 billion to fix 1 million potholes, so that regional roads stop looking like the surface of the moon. We have a plan for better finances with honest and open budgets, a live spending tracker and a 10-year economic plan to deliver a real cash surplus by 2032 and end Labor's debt crisis. We have a plan for home ownership by fast-tracking land release, cutting the red tape stopping new builds and expanding the inner city to get more townhouses and apartments built close to jobs. We have a plan for all of this and much more. All Labor has delivered is $15 billion worth of corruption, nearly $200 billion of debt and zero accountability. Enough is enough. Vote them out this November.

BAPS Charities

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (15:29): I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak about my good friends at BAPS. Each winter BAPS Charities support partners, particularly with Community Information & Support Cranbourne, to help vulnerable families stay warm. This year 56 blankets were donated to Community Information & Support Cranbourne, building on the 50 blankets provided the previous year, bringing real warmth and dignity to individuals and families across Cranbourne and the wider City of Casey who are facing financial stress, homelessness or social isolation. Leanne Petrides and her team at CISC do remarkable work every day, from emergency relief to counselling and family violence, and BAPS Charities are proud to stand alongside them.

Casey Warriors Rugby League Club

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (15:29): On another matter, the Casey Warriors are amazing. On Saturday afternoon I joined hundreds of members of the Casey Warriors in honouring their president Numa Daniels. It was certainly an event for the ages and the best kept secret in town. Numa was brought out onto the field with his beloved wife and family, where the terrific young players performed an emotional and moving haka. They then unveiled the name of the stadium. The Casey Warriors stadium will now be named the Numa Daniels stadium, as appropriate, and I want to add my voice of appreciation and thanks to Numa Daniels and his family for all they have done for our community – and especially a great thankyou to the Casey Warriors. You are a great team. You absolutely enhance our community every day.

Salvation Army Shepparton Corps

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (15:30): Last Friday I attended the Shepparton Salvos' fourth annual Walking Home event to increase awareness and reduce the stigma of homelessness. I joined the community and walked together alongside representatives from youth services and homeless services. It was also great to see so many students participate. A care day was also held during the week which provided free haircuts, beard trims, dental checks, mental health check-ins and a community nurse providing general health checks for people experiencing homelessness. These connections build conversations and the opportunity to build and find out about the person's circumstances and where they can be supported and assisted. We are seeing an alarming rise in homelessness from people sleeping in tents or in cars, and the reality of homelessness is becoming so much more visible, with more and more people sleeping rough on our streets. I want to acknowledge the many homelessness service providers and also Scott and his team at Shepparton Salvation Army, who do an amazing job, and Salvation Army youth participation worker Jim and his team who support youth homelessness. We cannot keep going in the same direction with more and more people becoming homeless. We must prioritise more housing support and support those that need us most. It is a human right to have the dignity of a roof over your head and a safe place to call home.

Education First Youth Foyer Shepparton

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (15:31): I also wish to congratulate the Shepparton youth foyer on their 10th birthday. The foyer has supported over 370 young people at risk of homelessness,

transforming their lives through housing, education and support. The foyer is an amazing example of how when vulnerable people are supported their lives change forever.

Chris Meddows-Taylor

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (15:32): Last month we lost a man whose contribution to regional Victoria, the labour movement and the Ripon electorate cannot be overstated. Chris Meddows-Taylor was a former six-time mayor of the Central Goldfields shire, respected public servant, champion of regional development and one of the driving forces behind the Victorian goldfields World Heritage bid. Throughout his life Chris devoted his extraordinary talents to making communities better, stronger and more connected. He knew every corner of our region, every challenge, every opportunity and every story worth telling. He was generous with his wisdom, relentless in his advocacy and deeply committed to the people he served. Whether it was improved services for Talbot, better transport and telecommunications or economic growth Chris never stopped working for his community. Even in his final days he was still focused on how to make life better for others. Beyond his achievements Chris will be remembered for his kindness, wit, charm and wicked humour. He greeted people with warmth and sincerity, often saying, 'I'm all the better for seeing you.' In many ways that simple phrase captured who he was: a gentleman, an optimist and someone who made others feel valued. To his beloved partner Frank, who is here with us today, and to all who loved him I extend my deepest condolences. Chris Meddows-Taylor leaves a remarkable legacy of public service, friendship and community leadership. We are a lesser community for having lost him, but we are a far better community for having had him. Vale, Chris.

Road maintenance

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (15:33): My members statement today is written by Sienna Bucknall, a 16-year-old work experience student who is with me this week:

> Yesterday there was thousands of dollars worth of damage on close to over 40 cars because the Premier cannot deliver what Victorians desperately need.
>
> The Premier served as the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.
>
> Victorians don't have safe roads.
>
> People do not have thousands of dollars or the time or the energy to sacrifice Labor's incompetence.
>
> The budget papers state the government exceeded its targets for regional pothole repairs in 2025–26, but if there is an excess of success I struggle to see it.
>
> I witness with my own eyes on the Princes Highway near Bunyip. Victorians couldn't get to work, couldn't get out of the weather, they were forced to put their lives at risk because of Labor's expensive but cheaply executed band aid fixes.

If a 16-year-old work experience student gets what is going on in my electorate, how come the government cannot accept it? We have had terrible roads under Andrews and terrible roads under Allan, and they are not going to be any different under Carroll. That is why the Victorian Liberals have a plan: $5 billion to fix a million potholes. It is only going to happen under Jess Wilson. It is not going to happen under those opposite, and I cannot wait for 28 November so our roads are in better condition.

Van Viet Truong

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (15:35): I would like to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge the tragic passing of Van Viet Truong, who was violently assaulted in Sunshine last weekend. For more than 30 years Viet was a familiar and cherished face in our local community operating Hong Hung Asian grocery store in the heart of Hampshire Road. I had the privilege of knowing Viet and visiting his business many times over the past couple of years. Viet was a kind, generous and humble man. He was the sort of person who quietly looked after others, not because he had to but because that was simply who he was. Whenever we spoke, he would proudly talk about his children and the pure joy that they brought him. The pride he had in his family was unmistakable. My heart goes out to Viet's wife Lien and their two children. His loss is felt deeply, and the grief that our

community is feeling is overwhelming. Over the last week the Premier and the Minister for Police have joined me in Sunshine on multiple occasions to meet with local traders and hear firsthand of their experiences and their concerns with respect to community safety. Our business community in Sunshine is grieving the loss of a man who was not only a respected trader but a friend, a mentor and a pillar of the Vietnamese community. Viet was not just a good Samaritan. He is a hero to our community in Sunshine. My message to people that would like to visit our community at this time is – *(Time expired)*

Privatisation policy

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:36): Cabinet documents reveal that the Victorian Labor government has spent the last five years secretly planning to privatise Melbourne Water. Let that sink in. Labor wants to sell off our water system. Letting profit-driven corporations get their hands on our water would be a complete disaster. Just look at what happened in the UK when they privatised water. They have seen skyrocketing bills, water outages, no water coming out of the taps and raw sewage being pumped into rivers and beaches.

The new Premier says that he will not privatise our water, but Labor have said this before and then found even more creative ways to monetise our public assets, like long-term leases, ground lease models and public–private partnerships. They are all a similar thing: they are taking a service that the government run for public benefit and handing it to a corporation to profit from. What do Victorians get in return? The government gets a short-term cash injection to make its balance sheet look a little bit better, but the public gets poorer services and higher costs, and water is just the latest. Labor in Victoria over the last 12 years has sold off or privatised our port, toll roads, public housing, land, the land titles office and VicRoads. In fact Labor has sold off pretty much everything that Jeff Kennett could not. As economist Greg Jericho puts it, neoliberalism has spread through our politics like a cancer, gutting public services in the name of profit. Yet Labor is fully signed up for it. The Greens, however, will always keep public assets in public hands, where they belong.

Bellarine electorate surf lifesaving clubs

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (15:38): It has been a privilege over the past few weeks to attend presentation nights for the Ocean Grove Surf Life Saving Club, Barwon Heads 13th Beach Surf Life Saving Club and Point Lonsdale Surf Life Saving Club. They are three different clubs in three different communities, but one thing that was very clear was the incredible commitment of the people who gave their time to keep our beaches safe and support the next generation of lifesavers. These nights are opportunities to celebrate and recognise milestones. But it is also an important reminder of those who sit behind each patrol, each training session and each Nippers program. It is our volunteers, the lifeguards, coaches, trainers, committee members, officials, parents and first aiders – all the people working behind the scenes – that make these clubs what they are. It is about more than just beach patrols. It builds confidence, resilience, friendship and leadership. It gives young people a place to belong. I want to say a very sincere thankyou to every volunteer across the clubs, but I would also like to make a special mention to Huw Joyce, who was recognised with a national medal for 15 years of voluntary service to Point Lonsdale Surf Life Saving Club. He started when he was seven in Nippers, encouraged by his dad Alan, and went on to complete a surf rescue certificate and bronze medallion, along with training rescue boats. But what is incredible and stands out the most is the number of young lifesavers that Huw has helped along the way. He has mentored close to a thousand young lifesavers. This is an extraordinary contribution. To Huw: congratulations on this well-deserved recognition. And to Alan, his dad: I know you are very proud. To everyone who volunteers: thank you; our community is safer, stronger and better because of you.

Barngeong Reserve

David HODGETT (Croydon) (15:39): Recently I visited Barngeong Reserve with Grant Hutchinson, the Liberal candidate for Croydon, to meet with Brad Eley, president of the Croydon Junior Football Club. Brad spoke proudly about the club's continued growth, with participation

increasing significantly and team numbers expanding from three to 10 this year alone. Barngeong Reserve is home to several community sporting organisations, including the Croydon Junior Football Club, the Croydon Rams Baseball Club and the Croydon North Cricket Club. While the playing surfaces, lighting and scoreboard are in good condition, the pavilion and amenities are outdated and no longer meet the needs of this shared facility. The existing facilities are not disability compliant and lack suitable separate change rooms for male and female participants, limiting the ability of clubs to accommodate the growing number of women and girls involved in sport. The club acknowledges Maroondah City Council's ongoing support for community sport and understands that upgrades are subject to competing priorities; however, the need for improvements at Barngeong Reserve is becoming increasingly urgent. While I secured funding for minor upgrades in 2013, these works are no longer sufficient to meet current demand. I intend to meet with Maroondah council in the coming weeks to discuss this matter further. I also know that Grant Hutchinson will continue to advocate strongly for a modern, fit-for-purpose facility that can support the needs of local clubs and the broader community. Today I raise the issue to draw it to the attention of the Minister for Community Sport and to emphasise the need for funding to upgrade the facilities at Barngeong Reserve. Finally, I acknowledge the important role grassroots sports clubs play in our communities. They promote health and wellbeing and foster teamwork and connection.

Monbulk electorate community events

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (15:41): If there is one thing that never ceases to amaze me about our community across Monbulk district, from Gembrook to the Gully, Narre Warren East to Wandin East and all in between, it is the deep sense of connection of our people. In the past fortnight I have attended a number of events bringing our community together.

I had the great pleasure of officially opening the Kallista mechanics hall's renovated kitchen and meeting room. These works were funded through a $50,000 grant from our government's Tiny Towns funding and $47,000 raised by the wonderful hall committee. An additional $75,000 from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action provided more maintenance to this 113-year-old building, so it can now service the community better than ever. This was evident by the number of locals who turned up on a bitterly cold winter's night to have mugs of soup by the fire and listen to live music to celebrate the occasion.

It is a happy 40th birthday to Life Activities Club Knox, which has been providing activities and connection for our retired and preretired citizens for all of those years. Judging by the number of attendees in the hall at Underwood Road in Ferntree Gully, it is thriving, with over 200 members. We have this great group to thank for keeping them engaged and active. It was a delight to be able to join them for part of the celebrations.

I also had the soul-nourishing pleasure of attending Voices from the Edge, an inclusive day of music, performance and art focusing on amplifying the voices from First Nations and LGBTQIA+ communities, people with a disability and all abilities and refugee and migrant communities. It was hosted by the wonderful Tecoma Uniting Church. What a beautiful chance it was to listen, learn, connect and celebrate together.

Please indulge me in wishing my beautiful Bella a happy 18th birthday on Friday.

Mulgrave electorate community events

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (15:42): I rise to highlight the rich diversity of our south-east community through some recent events I had the privilege to attend.

I joined the Australian Vietnamese Women's Association in Springvale for the opening of the Mai Place book exchange and cafe and their fifth dementia support group. Mai Place provides a warm hub for seniors and volunteers to connect, while the dementia support group delivers culturally appropriate care in familiar languages. I congratulate the AVWA board, staff and volunteers for fostering true

inclusion and reducing social isolation across all stages of life. Starting from a group of 13 women at a kitchen table, AVWA is going strong, with 450 staff and over 100 volunteers. I congratulate their CEO Nicky Chung on such an achievement.

I also attended the Australia Bangladesh Association's winter cake festival, or pitha utsab, at the Mulgrave community centre. Pitha is a cherished tradition of passing culture and family heritage down through generations. Events like this remind us that when people feel respected and connected, our whole community grows stronger.

I joined the Teo Chew Chinese Association in Springvale to celebrate the birthday of Lord Guan. Honouring values of loyalty, integrity and righteousness, the Teo Chew community continues to strengthen our multicultural fabric.

Theatre Works

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:44): My electorate has one of the largest concentrations of arts organisations in the world, and I want to zone in on Theatre Works. It is one of the longest-running independent theatres. I want to also salute their new chair Susan Thacore and wish all the best to Krystalla Pearce, who is the new artistic director and CEO. I had the great pleasure of seeing *William Shakespeare's Reservoir Dogs* last week. It was absolutely brilliant, as always – all their productions are very uplifting. I must say Theatre Works is much loved in the local area. Locals have a lot of pride in this theatre. They have coffees there as well during the week, and it is really fostering pathways for people into the creative arts. It is really great to see that the $1.1 million that we invested, along with philanthropy, into the upgrades to Theatre Works some time back is now actually reaping rewards for the actors and all the people who support the performances alike. It is really fantastic.

Lemnos Gallipoli memorial service

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:45): Also, I attended the Lemnos Gallipoli commemoration at Lemnos Square at the weekend. It was great to see Spencer and Scarlet from Albert Park College – they delivered some beautiful poems. It is really about honouring the nurses and soldiers during World War I and also the beautiful people of Lemnos, who really took care of Australians, fostering great relationships between Greece and Australia into the future. I thank my friend Lee Tarlamis OAM for his contribution.

Coburg West Primary School

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (15:46): Over recent weeks I had the absolute pleasure of welcoming multiple classes from my former primary school, Coburg West Primary, to Parliament for a tour and to present certificates to students who participated in the parliamentary prize and speech competition, including Scout from 5E, who spoke about using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander place names more often. Elena from 5T spoke about dedicating increased funding for the Lost Dogs' Home. Ella from 5T spoke about the need to combat bullying and foster respectful relationships in schools. Eda from 5T spoke about the need for greater fairness, equality and inclusivity in our society. Vito from 5T spoke on the important issue of AI and protecting our arts and creative industries. Eddie and Alex from 5T advocated for responsible and sustainable government expenditure for the public good. I commend all students who entered the competition for their passionate advocacy. I am very confident we may yet see another MP coming out of Coburg West Primary School in the near future.

Coburg early childhood education and care

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (15:46): I welcomed the Minister for Children, Minister Blandthorn, to celebrate the commencement of works on our brand new kinder on the corner of Gaffney Street and Bishop Street recently at the former Coburg Special Developmental School site. The works will provide for state-of-the-art new kinder facilities directly adjoining Coburg North Primary School and Harmony Park. Opening from 2028, it will provide at least three kinder rooms and 178 new places in the future.

Nelson's Pharmacy

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (15:47): On 23 June I had the privilege to join the Premier, the Minister for Health and the member for Broadmeadows at Nelson's Pharmacy at 124 West Street, Hadfield, to announce an expansion of our chemist care program. Established 25 years ago by dedicated local pharmacist Nicole Hardwick, Nelson's Pharmacy has continued to dispense diligent and comprehensive health treatment and services to many, many residents across our community.

AVG Travels

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (15:47): Recently I met with members of my local community in Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing who were affected by the collapse of AVG Travels. When AVG Travels was placed into liquidation, the affected families not only lost their hard-earned money but lost their time and the opportunity to create memories and experiences for themselves and their loved ones. When I met with affected community members to hear their concerns and stories, I was outraged. Families have been left overseas and refunds left unpaid for weeks. While this is a federal issue, I felt it necessary to meet with the Minister for Consumer Affairs to raise the matter in my capacity as their local state member.

Additionally, I want to show my support for the petition of affected community members and families which is going around at the moment. The petition is called the 'Mandatory consumer protection reform for Australian travellers' petition. It is to be presented in the federal Parliament in hope that we may achieve some remedy for those affected community members. Thank you to the local community for their coordination in raising this matter and for sharing their incredibly difficult experiences.

Bills

Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Sonya Kilkenny:

That this bill be now read a second time.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:48): I rise to speak on the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026. Crime has consequences, and not dealing with crime has a profound, longstanding and tragic impact on our community. We have seen that in recent days. It is important, as we debate this bill – a bill that seeks to address crime – from the commencement of this debate to acknowledge Van Viet Truong and the tragic loss of a member of the Sunshine community who was taken from the community far too young and in a way that I think has touched the heart of every Victorian. He was a local trader of 30 years, and you could see the outpouring of grief from the community. I say again these are the consequences of crime left unchecked. These are the consequences of not being tough when it comes to offenders being left out on the street, who will at times through repeat crime cause the most tragic consequences for community and for victims.

We have talked in this chamber for many years about the surging crime in our community and the weakness of our laws. As these debates occurred, the government initially denied crime was occurring. They literally denied that there was a crime problem. They used words that suggested crime and increases in crime were not real and not occurring and that there was no crime crisis. In fact the former Premier Daniel Andrews literally chastised someone in my community for calling out the increase in crime. He chastised her, belittled her and said that she did not understand crime data. We have seen with every certainty a surge in crime to the point where there is no other way to describe it than as a crime crisis. It is a crime crisis that has seen a softening of our laws and a softening of bail, which has meant that specifically youth offenders are on the street. On many occasions they are committing repeat offences and, once arrested through the good work of Victoria Police, are let out through the revolving bail door.

As a result, in the months before an election the government is seeking to politically fix the issue of crime, not actually fix the issue of crime. The Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill is one of those attempted political fixes. What this bill does is create a new offence, punishable by a maximum of life imprisonment, where an adult recruiting a child to engage in criminal activity constitutes an offence punishable on first conviction by 15 years imprisonment or more. In short what this bill does is create a new recruitment-of-children offence that in the government's view acquits the Premier's and the Attorney-General's commitment of November last year to create this new aggravated offence.

What this bill fails to do, like all legislative measures moved by this government in relation to crime, is actually deal with the problem, because inherent in this government is a belief that certain offenders should not be punished, because of their age. I am not talking about offenders who are under the age of 18; I am talking about youth offenders primarily, in the government's mind, up to the age of 21. When you treat offenders as different classes of offenders, what you do is create a loophole through which offenders will repeat their crimes – we are seeing that without any question and now without any dispute – and also loopholes in how you manage those criminals. That is, unfortunately, what this bill will do.

We will not oppose this bill, but under standing orders I wish to advise the house of amendments to the bill and request that they be circulated. In doing so we are seeking to make one primary change to this bill. This bill creates a new offence for adults, in shorthand, and says, 'If an adult recruits, they commit an offence.' So what will happen as a result of this bill? An adult offender will recruit one child who will now do all of the recruiting. This bill creates a new loophole which is encouraging an adult criminal to conduct a pyramid scheme. That is exactly what will happen as a result of this bill, and the government was not able to explain why the offence was only targeted at adults. Recruitment is not and should not be an offence that only an adult commits. If a 17-year-old conducts a recruitment campaign of criminals, why should that 17-year-old be treated differently than if that recruiter is 19? How can it possibly be that the government would propose a scheme that says a 17-year-old recruiter should not receive the same punishment for the crime as a 19-year-old?

All this does is underline the problem with this government in the way that it creates different classes of offending based on age, because in the government's mind what they believe is that young people deserve endless chances no matter what their crime, and you can see that. I mean, the last statistics that I looked at in terms of the Children's Court – and I am going on memory here – show that outcomes in relation to crimes committed by children saw an average, in the last period, of detention of 3 per cent, so 97 per cent of offenders were not detained as a punishment for their crime. How are those odds? If you are a youth offender, you can bet your bottom dollar that it is very, very hard to be detained in Victoria. And what you now know, as a result of this new offence being put into the statute books, is if you are a recruiter of criminals, hire a young person to do the recruiting for you, because then you will be only guilty of one offence, one crime. You will be guilty for the one single recruiter that you recruit, and if that recruiter then recruits 50 children for you, you are guilty of nothing.

This bill, through a giant loophole, enables a pyramid scheme. That is why the coalition will move, and has moved in this chamber, amendments that take out the word 'adult' and, in simple terms, say, 'If you recruit, as a person, you are guilty of the offence.' I think that that passes the commonsense test, and I am very sure Victorians would agree. In fact I am very sure Victorians are sick of seeing the loopholes in relation to the crime that is occurring from the legislative reforms that the government has sought to make over time, because every single time the government moves a bill in this place, regularly, if not almost immediately, the opposition will stand up and say, 'This bill will not fix the problem that exists. This bill will not solve the category and type of crime that is occurring.'

And I would say that the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill will not close the loophole that is seeing what the government acknowledges is a problem in relation to recruitment of children who are committing crimes. In the government's own words, they have seen a need for this offence because the government have identified that under existing legislation there is

not enough power to address this issue. In the bill briefing the government gave they confirmed that between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2024, over that period, there were 29 charges for the existing offence before this bill and four individuals were convicted. Over this period there is no doubt and no question we have seen an explosion in crime, we have seen an explosion in gang-related activity and we have seen an explosion in relation to the recruitment of children to commit crimes, and we have seen four individuals convicted.

This bill, because of that loophole, has been drafted to discourage recruitment. But as I said earlier, what this bill does in its drafting is aim at adults who recruit, and like with every other measure when it comes to bail, when it comes to violent behaviour and when it comes to recruitment, the government creates legislation that creates categories of offenders based on their age, and it says that if you are not an adult, you do not deserve to be punished despite that crime. Well, our amendment seeks to address that, and it is an amendment that we will move here and we will move in the other place, because our view is that when a person recruits, that person should be guilty of the offence. If you are 17, for example, and you seek to recruit, these specific measures should be available in relation to the consequence you receive, and they are not under the drafting of this bill. That is why we have sought to move that amendment both here and in the other place.

We cannot keep seeing not only a crime crisis but legislative drafting that protects certain offenders. By creating two classes of offending based on age, you are protecting certain offenders. Why the community is so angry about it is because you are not protecting an offender for a minor crime. In fact what the community now sees and knows to be true – because it is true – is that the government's laws protect youth offenders on the basis of them being young and in many cases protect youth offenders who are committing dozens of crimes, the most serious crimes. It is why the coalition has announced a very strong difference in the government's fake 'adult crime, adult time' legislation, and the coalition has proposed strong laws which we will implement straightaway if we are elected.

When the government announced their 'adult crime, adult time' legislation, they looked at Queensland, which has roughly 50 laws within the purview of that legislation – 50 serious offences – and they said they will bring down five in full and they will bring down three in part. So of the eight offences that exist under the government's adult crime legislation, there are five crimes which are fully covered – five out of 50, 10 per cent – and three in part, so eight of 50. The coalition has already committed to 25 falling under the adult crime legislation, because we believe that violent crime must stop and the only way to stop it is to stop having a two-tiered system that encourages young people to offend because there are no consequences. I have spoken about this particular instance before. I recall a series of youth offenders conducting multiple carjackings in my community not that long ago and being arrested on a Saturday afternoon in my main street in front of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people. As the two offenders were being arrested, they were laughing to each other, and one of them shouted out to the other, 'See you in a couple of hours when I get bail.' And, guess what, 3 hours later they were on bail.

Unfortunately, what the legislation this government has put forward does is it says that if you commit certain violent crimes, you get out of jail free because you are not an adult. Literally the government is building get-out-of-jail-free cards into all of its legislation. It says that if you are young, you get out of jail. The government will say it is not true, but the community knows it is true. That is a point we have also been making: every single time the government has come into this house with a bill, not only have we said it will not solve the problem, but we have said the community will work it out. And now not only do you see the government seek to try and move legislation which is flawed but you see the new Premier somehow claim – robotically, of course – that he is going to do something about crime. 'I'm going to do something about crime,' says the new Premier. No-one believes it to be true, because when you dig underneath the substance of what the robot says, there is nothing there.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Order! Member for Brighton, correct titles.

James NEWBURY: What title? I am talking about robots.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): There was a description before of someone else, and that was then carried through. I am just asking for correct titles.

James NEWBURY: So not descriptions, correct titles. Thank you for the clarification on your contribution. Anyway, whatever – we will leave that where it is. People are touchy. The new Premier will step up and say, 'I'm going to do something about crime.'

A member: 'Gonna'.

James NEWBURY: 'Gonna do something about crime.' What? It is like the royal commission: 'I'm going to do something about a royal commission.' What? What are you going to do? The Premier has done nothing about crime – nothing. You could see that in Sunshine five of the local mayors drew attention to the police station closures and the lack of policing. Very fair points that have been made, frankly, by most Victorians – not Labor members of Parliament, because they have been busy shutting them. Actually, there was one member – I have forgotten the member's name – who let the cat out of the bag and did speak about the issue before they were probably hauled away.

The government has proudly overseen the closure of police stations and the reduction in policing. But the community can see what has happened. As I said earlier, when measures have been moved in this place, we have said they will not work. We have also said that Victorians will see the failure by this government on crime, and the community can now see the failure, because normal people are becoming victims to the worst type of offending, most of the time by repeat offenders – not all of the time, but most of the time some of the worst crimes are being committed by repeat offenders. Victorians are now looking on and seeing their new Premier standing up and saying, 'I'm going to do something about crime.' They know that he has not, and they know that he will not. We have eight more sitting days until an election, so they know this government will not fix the crime crisis and they know the coalition will.

At the end of the day Labor believes that if you are not an adult you should have the door open to you and you should be let out no matter what crime you have committed. There is no more offensive behaviour by this government than that which has seen aggravated home invaders and carjackers commit the worst possible crimes and be let out again and again and again. There are examples of tens and dozens of offences being committed by certain offenders. When you look at the weak adult crime provisions, which cover only eight crimes, those provisions do not cover some of the worst offending that is occurring in the community.

If you look at arson, as police have said publicly, they believe children are being recruited to commit arson attacks on Victorian businesses – recruitment of children. Why are children being recruited? Because they are let out. And every time they are caught, guess what happens. You can track it. Before the end of the police officer's shift the offender is bailed because the government believes that as they are not adults the door should be open to them. 'Why would you want to punish them? Why would you want a consequence?' says Labor. Because they are violent offenders. What the coalition will ensure happens, I can say, is that adult crime will include arson because we believe it is one.

We have already announced 25 crimes that should be considered adult crimes, because we do not believe in two categories of offending – that if you are not an adult you should be treated differently. We do not believe that, when a 17-year-old commits a certain type of attack, that 17-year-old should be treated differently than a 19-year-old is. If you are old enough to go into someone's house with a machete and hold it up to some poor Victorian's neck, you should face the full consequence of the law, and that is what we will ensure.

This bill, although we will not oppose it, as I have said, does everything that this government does by way of law and order legislation: it creates loopholes. As I said earlier, this bill creates an offence for adults. What this bill, I fear, will do is this: if you think through what has occurred with the recruitment of children to commit arson, if an offender recruits one child and gets that child to commit to recruit

on their behalf effectively, they are only guilty of one offence, not the pyramid scheme that is created which will see all of the other children go into the offending.

That is why the coalition is seeking to amend the bill: to ensure that loopholes do not exist. That does not mean that the law should not account for differences in age at all, but our view is when it comes to serious violent crime, especially serious repeat violent crime, there should not be a tolerance that allows the worst types of crimes to be forgiven because, for example, the offender is 17, not 18 or 19. We believe that if you are old enough to commit a serious violent crime, you should be dealt with in that way. I say finally that the coalition will not be opposing the bill, but we will be seeking to move those amendments in both this place and the other place.

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Victim Support, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Community Sport) (16:16): I rise today to speak on the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026. I am very pleased to be able to do so because last week I had the privilege of being sworn in as the Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Victim Support. I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak on this important bill today, and I am also very pleased to hear that those opposite will not be opposing the bill.

We know that many Victorians are concerned about incidents of children involved in serious crimes. Every Victorian has the right to feel safe in their home, in their community and in their local neighbourhood, and my thoughts and my deepest sympathies are with anyone who has been a victim of crime in this state. These crimes can be traumatic and devastating for victims, for families and for communities, and, frankly, they are unacceptable. But there is also an understanding across our community that when a child becomes involved in serious and violent criminal activity it is a sign that something has gone seriously wrong. Children who engage in high-risk or harmful behaviours are often not acting in isolation. There can be complex and deeply troubling circumstances behind a child's involvement in crime, including family violence, abuse, neglect, housing instability, social isolation, exclusion from education and other significant disadvantages.

We are seeing another disturbing factor: organised crime groups who deliberately target vulnerable children and recruit them to carry out serious offences. Exploiting vulnerable children, especially those who have already experienced disadvantage, is absolutely inexcusable. Not only does it cause enormous harm to both victims and the communities in which they live, but we also know that once children are introduced to crime they are more likely to be on a pathway towards further offending and more serious criminal activity. That is why this bill is so important.

The bill will create a new offence for an adult recruiting a child to engage in serious and violent criminal activity. These offences include murder, home invasion, carjacking and their aggravated forms, armed robbery, kidnapping, arson and extortion with a threat to kill or inflict injury. Importantly, the offence is of the recruitment itself. It does not matter whether the child ultimately carries out the criminal activity or carries out a different criminal offence. The harm begins when the adult deliberately recruits a child into serious criminal activity, so that is where our laws need to intervene. The bill introduces a new offence into the Crimes Act 1958 for recruiting a child to engage in serious criminal activity that constitutes an offence carrying a maximum penalty of 15 years or more imprisonment. The new offence will apply when an adult recruits a child to engage in this serious criminal activity knowing or being reckless as to whether that person is a child. The bill also amends the existing recruitment offence so that it can apply where a person is reckless as to whether the individual being recruited is a child. The existing recruitment offence applies for offences that carry a maximum penalty of between five and 15 years, with the recruitment offence penalty being a maximum of 15 years. The new offence will carry a maximum penalty of a life sentence. These changes will strengthen the application of the offences, particularly in cases involving organised crime networks and criminal gangs. This sends a very clear message: adults who recruit children to participate in serious offending are committing an extremely serious crime themselves, and their sentences should reflect their high level of criminal culpability.

The bill delivers on the government's commitment to strengthening our laws around the recruitment of children by organised crime networks, and it responds directly to the concerns of organised crime groups using vulnerable young people to carry out serious offences on their behalf. The introduction of this new offence also follows the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission's findings in its *Opening the Books* report on the impact of serious and organised crime in Australia. The report found that organised crime groups are deliberately recruiting vulnerable young people to carry out violent acts because they are cheaper to hire, more easily influenced and more accessible to recruit. This is deeply concerning. This bill will clearly denounce and criminalise that conduct. It will strengthen accountability, support community safety and, importantly, it will recognise the harm caused to the child being recruited. The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission has also made clear that tackling the recruitment of children by organised crime groups and criminal gangs requires collective solutions. Finding and charging people responsible for this conduct can be complex, particularly where those involved operate online or offshore. Victoria will continue working with law enforcement, other jurisdictions and relevant stakeholders to disrupt organised crime networks, to strengthen investigations and to support the prosecution of those who target children.

At the same time we know there is much more to do to prevent young people from becoming involved in crime in the first place. Last sitting week the Commission for Children and Young People tabled its inquiry *With Us, Not against Us*. I take this opportunity to thank the commission for this detailed work and its contribution to our understanding of children and young people involved in the criminal justice system. The government will carefully consider the findings and recommendations in the report, which are wideranging and have implications across the whole of government. But I will note the report includes that some adults have used the power imbalance to coerce, control and manipulate children into offending. It notes that children who have experienced abuse, housing instability, disability, social isolation or exclusion from education can be more likely to be targeted, increasing their risk of criminalisation and involvement in the justice system.

These findings reinforce the importance of taking a multipronged approach. We have introduced tough consequences for young offenders, with adult time for violent crime, and we must be tough on the adults and organised crime groups who exploit children. But we must also intervene early to prevent children from being drawn into crime in the first place. That is why the government's serious consequences and early intervention reforms are so important. Introduced last year, these reforms are designed to reduce violent youth offending by reinforcing clear boundaries for young people, both in the community and within the youth justice system. Last year we established the violence reduction unit, which is working to prevent violence before it starts by supporting programs that intervene early and work with young people at risk of becoming involved in violence. The VRU coordinates crime prevention programs across government and works directly with the community and young people to connect them to find new solutions. We know that lasting reduction in violent youth crime comes from early intervention, and that intervention works best when young people feel connected, valued and hopeful for their futures.

These reforms are not an excuse for children who commit serious violent crimes, but we must recognise the distinction between holding a child accountable for their actions and holding an adult accountable for deliberately recruiting and exploiting a child. Those adults are taking advantage of vulnerability, and they are putting children in harm's way. We will not stand by and allow that to continue. The Victorian government will continue to disrupt organised crime groups targeting children, working with our partners across the country to prevent offending, protect vulnerable young people and hold perpetrators to account, because when adults recruit children into serious crime, the harm is immediate and the impact is lasting, so the response must be firm. This bill is an important step in making sure that response is strong. It makes clear that recruiting a child into serious criminal activity is itself a serious crime and unacceptable in Victoria.

I will go back to where I started: exploiting vulnerable children, especially those who have often already experienced disadvantage, is absolutely inexcusable. That is why this bill is so important, and I commend the bill to the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (16:25): Although I am not happy to, I think the timing for me to speak on the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026 is impeccable, you might say, given the incident that we had in Mildura last week, the horrific incident that we had, with two children of 12 years old being the victims of a crime in and of itself and being run down in the Langtree Mall. Let me just say from the outset that nothing justifies an act like that, running down two children in public, but also nothing justifies recruiting children into a life of crime, which this bill hopes to address. I will get to the amendments that have been circulated by the Shadow Attorney-General in a moment. Going back to the acts over the weekend, I thank the Minister for Corrections at the table for involving me in the conversations moving forward with the community, because this is a whole-of-community approach that has led to the boiling point of community. We understand that there is anger within the community with rising crime, but again, nothing justifies the acts that were perpetrated last week – nothing justifies that.

I have been having many conversations, some, like I said, facilitated by the minister, over the last couple of days, and what has happened in this particular case and in many cases are failures of the multiple systems that have been put in place not only to protect children but to protect the community and to offer support to those giving care to those children. All of these systems have failed these kids, and that is statewide; that is not exclusive to Mildura. There are horrific failures of the systems here, and this bill, although well intentioned, is not going to address a lot of these. I asked the question myself even this morning. I had a phone call from a dear friend of mine who runs an engineering company in Mildura telling me that he had been burgled again overnight. I had raised the question and thought to myself: is this linked to recruiting children through organised crime to commit these crimes? There are no facts. Police obviously have not released facts or details of that case. An engineering plant is not often a target; it is pretty niche to be targeting that for burglary. You do not want to jump to conclusions, but I now know, after having conversations, like I said, over the last couple of days, that there certainly is an element in our local community of children being recruited to commit these crimes, which is horrific.

There was a meeting in Mildura last week, with the community getting together with heads of government as well, and the stories came out. These children that are being recruited into this life – and nothing justifies that – are vulnerable. Like I said, they have been failed by the system at every turn. Their carers have been failed by the system with lack of support. The minister was talking about early intervention. Early intervention cannot start at 11 or 12 years old. It needs to start at seven years old. When we have children committing crimes as young as 10 or 11 years old, by the time they are 12 years old those early intervention programs are too late. They need to start at seven. We know locally, after the meeting that happened of agencies coming together with government, that children are being recruited into crime, they are being paid in drugs and they are being sexually exploited, and there is no-one there to catch them. The stories are horrific. Because of the failure of this system, these kids feel like they have no choice, and their carers are at a loss what to do because there is no support there for them.

As I have said, although well intentioned, the bill as it is written risks creating a pyramid scheme if 'an adult' is the term used. The amendments from the member for Brighton address all of these issues, because using the term 'an adult' means that an adult could be charged with recruiting a child, but that child could then go on to recruit more children, so it creates that multilevel networking and marketing scheme. It is a pyramid scheme. That is how it will end up. If the adult at the top of the pyramid is charged with recruiting one child but that child can then go and recruit however many more, it creates that pyramid scheme. These amendments seriously need to be considered by the government. These are not radical changes; they help strengthen this bill to the point where it needs to be.

But along with this, it is not just one bill or act that needs to be strengthened. It is the entire system that keeps failing these kids and then failing the community, to the point where we get to community anger boiling over and snapping, leading to abhorrent acts like we saw last week in Mildura. Again, I will be clear: nothing justifies that. I do not care how many times you have been broken into, I do not care how many times your shop has been damaged, I do not care what the circumstances are – nothing justifies that. I just want to make that very clear so that I am not taken out of context: nothing justifies that. When you start talking about these issues and these incidents, the conversations that follow are obviously quite heated, or they can be, but these conversations need to be had.

Particularly when they are not city-based communities, the solutions need to be place based and community led, because what works in somewhere like Oakleigh or Cranbourne or wherever it might be in the city will not work in Mildura and will not work in Swan Hill or somewhere out in the regions. They need to be place based and community led. But bills like this also need to make sure they encapsulate that pyramid scheme that could emerge and will undoubtedly emerge, because organised crime and the criminals engaged in this type of activity are not silly. They will find loophole after loophole to exploit the system, and that is what has been happening to this point. So I strongly urge the government to consider these amendments put forward by the member for Brighton.

There were areas of concern, particularly from the Federation of Community Legal Centres. They actually oppose this bill in its current form and recommend that it be withdrawn pending broader consultation. They are of the opinion that it is drafted too broadly and is unlikely to disrupt those who control and profit from organised criminal activity. They argue that the provisions are more likely to capture marginalised young people. We know they are marginalised young people. We hear the commentary after incidents like we saw last week about where the kids' parents are and where the system is. Well, the system is not there and the supports are not there, and their parents are certainly not in the picture. Their carers are, and their carers do not get a huge amount of support.

It is a huge systemic failure of multiple systems. It is justice, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and social services that have failed these kids and their carers. It is the education system as well. Reduced timetables do not help kids when they are disengaged from school. So I am asking the government to seriously consider strengthening this bill with the amendments put forward by the member for Brighton.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (16:35): I rise to support the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026. Before coming to the substance of the bill and seeking to rebut some of the claims of the opposition – notwithstanding they will be supporting this bill – I come to this debate as the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Safety, the member for Pascoe Vale but also as someone who really got involved in politics as a result of three things that originally got me interested in politics and government. The first was that we had Bob Hawke as our local federal member of Parliament. At the time, he was also the Prime Minister, which was quite inspirational. The second thing is I grew up in a time when we had a Kennett Liberal government that closed 12 local schools in my community, including Coburg High, which my brother and sister used to go to. That saw me going to Northcote High, so I feel you, member for Mildura, 100 per cent on that.

The third thing that really got me interested was the fact that we did not have a youth centre at the time when I was growing up in my community, and so quite a few other enthusiastic young people and I started a campaign called the Oxygen youth campaign, which was all about creating breathing spaces for young people. We felt we saw young people being disparaged far too often in the local media, with coverage talking about young people who were loitering at the local station or that named them as bludgers who were binge-drinking or undertaking other types of antisocial behaviour. A group of us young people got together and said, 'That's not right.' The young people we knew overwhelmingly made a positive contribution to our community through our schools, our sporting clubs, our community groups and the like.

Those young people who may have been undertaking those types of behaviours needed our help, not our demonisation, so we started Oxygen, which was about creating breathing spaces for young faces. That led us to help construct, really, the funding towards the Harmony Park skatepark, which is there on Gaffney Street now, a skatepark at CB Smith Reserve in Fawkner and quite a few other initiatives. But the jewel in the crown of Oxygen was the Oxygen youth centre, a youth hub which still stands there today on Gaffney Street at the back of Coburg Lake. It is a multiservice council youth hub which supports thousands of young people every single year through different types of programs, initiatives and outreach. It still very much does an incredible job in supporting socio-economic, health and wellbeing outcomes for our community. Since its opening – in 2013, I believe – we have seen issues around young people continue to become more serious, particularly when it comes to youth crime.

On a sombre note, I just want to acknowledge Van Viet Truong, the 60-year-old owner of Hong Hung Asian Grocery in Sunshine, whose tragic death has deeply affected people in Melbourne's western suburbs, particularly the Vietnamese Australian community. Mr Truong was a local shopkeeper, a husband, a father and a much-loved member of his community. Police allege he was fatally injured after intervening during an incident involving young people in Hampshire Road. A 15-year-old has been charged with manslaughter and remains before the courts, and I will therefore say nothing further to prejudice those proceedings. But we can say this: a man went to work and did not come home. A family has lost someone they love, a community is deeply grieving, and traders and residents are understandably asking what more we can do to keep them safe. I commend the Premier for visiting – as well as the member for Laverton and the member for St Albans – and the Minister for Police for his efforts in proactively reaching out to the community.

It is a community I also know very well. I used to work at Brimbank City Council for quite a few years as the advocacy officer and director. We recently held a VRU, violence reduction unit, forum in Sunshine just off Hampshire Road at the Visy Cares Hub, talking about these very issues. This is why community safety must remain one of our highest responsibilities as legislators in this place, because all Victorians deserve the right to feel safe in their homes and their communities, on their streets, in their neighbourhoods and in their workplaces as well. That is why they rightly expect serious consequences for serious crimes.

There has been enormous public discussion about youth crime, and sometimes perceptions and reality can diverge, but governments cannot use that observation to dismiss what people are really experiencing. There has been a genuine and deeply concerning concentration of serious offending involving a relatively small cohort of young people through home invasions, carjackings, armed robberies, stolen vehicles, assaults, arson, weapons offending and others. We must neither exaggerate that challenge nor seek to minimise it, and there are encouraging signs. In the year to March 2026 Victoria's criminal incident rate fell by nearly 3 per cent and the youth offending rate fell by 6 per cent, the largest reduction in alleged youth offending since before the pandemic. Aggravated burglary fell 22 per cent and robbery fell 15 per cent. In my own community of Merri-bek total offending fell 13 per cent, robbery fell 29 per cent and weapons offending fell 19 per cent over that period. Those figures do matter, but they do not mean the job is done, because crime does remain too high. Serious youth violence remains too high, repeat offending remains too high and one family whose home is invaded, one shopkeeper who is attacked or one innocent person killed is one too many. That is why this government has strengthened the law.

We have introduced what are now amongst Australia's toughest bail settings, and the evidence shows that those laws are being used. Remand has increased. Alleged offenders being remanded is up 70 per cent. That is 10,000 more offenders that have been remanded. Bail revocations are up by 84 per cent and Children's Court bail refusals are up by one-third. We have introduced adult time for violent crime, increasing the likelihood of imprisonment and potential sentences for young people aged 14 and over who commit specified serious violent offences. We increased penalties for offences including aggravated home invasion and aggravated carjacking. We strengthened knife laws and banned machetes. We are investing $117.5 million into a specialised fast-track County Court youth list so that

serious matters can be determined sooner. Last year we increased the maximum penalty for the existing offence of recruiting children to commit crime from 10 to 15 years, and police had already laid 64 charges under that offence when this legislation before us today was introduced.

The victims and communities deserve and expect consequences for serious crime, and this bill before us is another step in that important work. The question we need to ask ourselves is: who is actually pulling the strings, overwhelmingly, when it comes to youth crime? The teenager caught committing the offence may be the most visible participant, but who told them to do it, who offered them money, who selected the target, who supplied the instructions, who organised the vehicle, who profits and who sits safely behind most overwhelmingly encrypted accounts while someone else's child takes all the risk? More often than not we know that it is organised crime, and organised crime has changed over the years. It is no longer necessarily a meeting in a backroom between hardened criminals. Recruitment can happen through social media, gaming platforms and encrypted messaging applications. Instructions can come from another suburb, another state or, as we have seen reported, even another country. Organised criminals identify vulnerabilities in recruiters, and they seek to exploit vulnerable young people, whether it is through money, status, belonging, trauma, disengagement from school, mental ill health, family instability, disability – intellectual and developmental – or social isolation.

The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission has warned that organised crime groups deliberately target young people because they are cheaper to hire, easier to influence, impressionable and readily accessible online. Think about the business model behind that for a moment. An adult criminal transfers the danger, transfers the visibility, transfers the prospect of arrest, transfers the possibility of injury or death and transfers the prison sentence – potentially all of that – onto a vulnerable child or children while keeping the profits for themselves. That is not merely recruitment, that is exploitation. If we are serious about dismantling organised crime, we cannot simply arrest the person at the bottom of the criminal food chain. We have to climb to the very top of it, to the crime boss and all the others in between, and that is what this legislation is designed to help us do.

The existing offence applies to an adult who recruits a child into criminal activity, carrying a maximum penalty of at least five years. The bill creates a distinct aggravated child recruitment offence for the most serious category of crime offences, carrying a maximum penalty of 15 years imprisonment, including life imprisonment. It captures 71 serious offences. Among them are murder, arson, home invasion, aggravated home invasion, carjacking, armed robbery, kidnapping, extortion involving threats to kill or injure and much more. The maximum penalty for an adult recruiter will be life imprisonment, and this reflects something very much fundamental: that if you are knowingly placing a child in the path of extreme violence while attempting to remain removed from its consequences your criminal culpability is extremely high and the law should recognise that. The bill also makes another important change. The prosecution will no longer have to establish that the recruiter actually knew the person was under 18. It will be sufficient to establish that the adult was reckless as to whether the person was a child.

With the time I have remaining I just want to touch on the other important work we are undertaking in this space. We have obviously supported Victoria Police with the investment, tools, powers and resources they need to keep us safe. We have recently announced the establishment of the organised crime command, supported by a $170 million investment, which is bringing together a number of taskforces, including Hawk, Viper, Lunar and Eclipse, and adding specialist investigators to that important work. We are recruiting more PSOs as well. But we have also established the violence reduction unit, Australia's first public health led model towards tackling root causes of crime, including housing, unemployment, mental health, wellbeing, education and the like. The VRU is undertaking extensive work, and I am very proud as the parliamentary secretary to support that work, which we are continuing to roll out through a number of initiatives through the $30 million-plus we have allocated to a number of programs already, including social workers in schools, youth mentors and so much more. It is in that respect that I commend this bill to the chamber.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (16:45): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026. A number of times I have spoken here in the chamber about the crime crisis that Victoria has been experiencing now for a number of years under the Andrews, Allan and now Carroll governments, and we must get to the bottom of this and ensure community safety is a number one priority. One of the big factors is dealing with youth. When we see youth being recruited by organised crime, by these criminals going out and targeting, in many instances, quite vulnerable youth and funding them to commit these horrendous crimes against people, the book must be absolutely thrown at these individuals – no ifs, no buts. The only way to stop this from happening is to ensure that there are consequences.

The bill that we have before us today looks at tackling this, but there are some loopholes still with this bill. I support the member for Brighton's amendments that have been put forward today to ensure that we do not see a pyramid-style system where you have an adult recruiting a younger person and that younger person going out there and recruiting a whole number of other young people to do multiple offences when there has only been one offence committed by the adult. We know at the end of the day, if there are 20 young people committing crimes that the kingpin behind it is responsible for, then that individual should be responsible for the 20 crimes, not for one crime. That pyramid-style scheme is where Victorians are vulnerable, and that needs to be shut down. We have suggested that to the government in the bill briefing. We have informed them with these amendments, and I would hope that the government will support the amendments that the opposition has put forward. There are many occasions on which we have done similar – proposed amendments and private members bills – to try and strengthen community safety in this state. Unfortunately, the government seem to know best, and they continue to push forward, with the results which we are seeing. That is why we see Victorians are most vulnerable and the crime crisis continues to thrive in this state. The only business that is doing any good at the moment is crime – it is horrible – and we will fix it with a fresh start come November.

One of the parts that we have been talking about is 'adult crime, adult time'. The government claim that they have taken our ideas and what they have done in Queensland and said, 'We're going to do the same here.' We know that is not working. We know that all that is is a slogan here under this current government. There are five elements that deal with adult crime. There are 20 other areas of adult crime that are serious crimes, like firebombing, like serious aggravated home invasions, like carjackings or like arson, that are not covered in 'adult crime, adult time'. That is where a lot of the recruitment of younger people actually takes place, so that is why it is important to take these crimes very seriously by young people and by adults as well, because if there are serious crimes that have been committed, it does not matter what the age is; there have got to be consequences that go with it. That is why many young offenders are on the merry-go-round of committing more and more serious offences, because they get let out, they go back on the streets and they commit more serious crimes. Our point of difference with Labor, should we be given the opportunity to govern after November, is a serious element for 20-plus offences when it comes to 'adult crime, adult time' to be tried in the County Court, in a more serious court with serious consequences, so these individuals once they are let out literally before a police officer's shift finishes are not tweeting out and saying, 'Look, I've been let out. How good is this?' That will not happen when there are serious consequences under a Wilson-led government.

We have seen horrific firebombings. We have seen tobacco stores that have been targeted. What are we up to? About 150 tobacco stores that have been targeted right across Victoria. We know that it is being done through organised crime syndicates, where young offenders are being told 'Go out there, knock over an IGA store. We'll give you $5 for every pack of cigarettes that you steal' or 'We'll give you a couple of thousand dollars if you burn down a tobacco store.' This is serious, serious stuff. Young people are being recruited. It is just absolutely not on, and we need to change it.

Jade Benham interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: The member for Mildura says they are also being paid with drugs and other kinds of inducements. This needs to stop. That is why we want to ensure that there are serious

consequences and that the recruitment process of younger offenders is completely stamped out. We will have early intervention programs to help young people as well. Our $100 million early intervention programs will give those young offenders a fresh start before they end up in a life of crime – put them into boot camps and get them out of the kind of bad scenario of bad role models that they are experiencing each and every day; give them positive role models and positive mentors, not the bad experiences that they are currently dealing with, with the bad eggs that are actually recruiting them. We know a lot of this stuff is being done internationally as well – a lot of the recruitment is done internationally. With a lot of the tobacco stores that are being done over, you have kingpins in Iran, Iraq or wherever they are, managing the system, managing the infrastructure and managing multimillion-dollar operations that are harming every single Victorian's life each and every day.

We all experience it. We all live with it. We all wake up with it every day in the media, and especially those strip-shop businesses that may live next door or work next door to a tobacco store or a business that is being targeted. Imagine doing that every day. Imagine having to wake up when you are living above a dodgy tobacco store, wondering whether you might be the person that has to deal with a store being firebombed from under you. Imagine having to live with that every day. Well, people are. What has this government done about it? Nothing, quite frankly. That is why things need to change. In my area, back on 10 November 2023, we had the Burgertory store burnt down, and that was a month after 7 October. Initially the Jewish community were blamed for doing it as retribution for the antisemitism that was happening – appalling stuff – only to find out months later that there were two individuals recruited and paid $20,000 to target a Burgertory store, to then blame others in a community that had been through hell and back as a result of this.

That is what is happening. People are being recruited. They are being paid to target businesses and to really run a complete *Breaking Bad* type of scenario on our streets, where you have got outlaw motorcycle gangs, where you have got the worst crooks in the country that are running things. I have heard it. I have heard many of the outlaw motorcycle gangs that have actually been pushed out of other states have been setting up operations here because it is just easier to do business. Can you believe it? You cannot.

Jade Benham interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: Easier for bikies, bad for business. In any every other type of business, you have got regulation like you would not believe. I mean, you cannot set up a coffee shop, but you can set up a bikie illegal tobacco store operation with no worries at all, no regulation. You can go out there and burn stuff down, knock yourself out, recruit people and off you go – away you go – with zero consequences. That needs to change.

I would hope that the government does support the amendments that we have put forward here. To think about some of the examples, police have made 65 arrests and laid 370 charges as part of Operation Eclipse, which targets crime syndicates behind the string of recent firebombings. But, guess what, they get off. They are out and about again, committing more of these serious crimes. A Mornington Peninsula man, aged 30, was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment in July 2026 for recruiting intellectually disabled teenagers to steal vehicles. I mean, talk about preying on the most vulnerable. He supplied them with drugs and balaclavas and coached them on stealing cars and evading police. That is what is happening. These absolutely disgusting individuals – I would not even call them humans – are going out there and recruiting disabled, vulnerable people, providing them the wherewithal and all the information to be able to go and commit the crime and a get-out-of-jail card should they get caught. These people all need to stop. They all need to be locked up. They need consequences. No matter whether it is one crime or 27 crimes, these individuals should be made responsible for all of them.

John LISTER (Werribee) (16:55): I have mentioned here many a time that before I was here I was a public school teacher, and I have seen firsthand the impacts of the recruitment of children to commit crimes in our community. Teaching at Wyndham Central College, in the same community that raised

me, I knew that I wanted to see young people in my community have the same opportunities that I had growing up. We all know just how much potential our young people have in the western suburbs, but we also know that young people can be vulnerable to adults who seek to exploit them and draw them into criminal activity. That is something we should never accept.

When I am out knocking on doors around Werribee, Wyndham Vale, Manor Lakes and Mambourin, community safety is consistently one of the issues people raise with me. Parents want to know their kids are safe and families want to feel safe in their homes, and locals rightly expect their government to take serious offending as seriously as we can. But keeping our community safe is also about putting responsibility where it belongs – not just on the child committing that crime but on the adults grooming them to do it, because that is what this is: it is grooming. Children should never be used by adults or organised criminal networks to carry out serious crimes on their behalf, and that is why I am proud to support this amendment that is before the house today.

To give a little bit of background about where we are sitting at the moment in the City of Wyndham in particular, I meet quite regularly with our local area commanders and talk about some of the crime trends that they are seeing. When I was first elected, one of the first things I did was go and meet with our local area commander. I have mentioned on a number of occasions that when they came out with the de-identified list of repeat offenders under the age of 18, they went through what the dedicated youth crime taskforce that was set up with funding from this government was doing to address that. But we knew it was about more than just a policing response. We also needed to match it with laws that introduced serious consequences for these crimes. We have seen a slight drop in the number of 12- to 17-year-old offenders in the City of Wyndham, from 1000 down to 990, but this is still far too many. As someone who has grown up in this community, it really shocks me to see so many young people turning to a life of crime. This is what this bill is about.

We have laws making it an offence for an adult to recruit a child to engage in criminal activity, and this bill goes to strengthening those laws when comes to some of the most serious offending. It creates a new offence for an adult who recruits a child to engage in serious criminal activity where that underlying offence carries a maximum penalty of 15 years or more. That captures extremely serious crimes, including murder, home invasion, carjacking, armed robbery and arson. The message this bill sends is clear. It strengthens the existing recruitment offence so that it can apply where an adult knows or is reckless as to whether the person they are recruiting is a child, because we know so much more of this offending is being done through online platforms, where anonymity is used for criminals' benefit. The harm starts with that recruitment and contact with criminals in the first place. We all know that organised criminals should not be able to exploit the vulnerability of young people, putting them in harm's way and then distancing themselves from the consequences. This puts the focus squarely on those adults who seek to pull young people into a life of crime.

For me, this is not an abstract issue. Not only do I meet with my local police quite regularly to talk about this, but I also meet with the youth workers from some of our community support groups in Wyndham who work with marginalised young people, and I thank them for helping me prepare my contribution on this bill and for some of the anecdotes that they shared from their work on the ground. These youth workers have described adults deliberately seeking out vulnerable young people in places where they should feel safe, around schools and social settings. It does not begin necessarily with serious crime; it can begin with an offer of friendship, which for so many of these kids, with a disconnect from family or friends or with other social issues, can be so huge.

It begins with small amounts of money, with gifts, with the promise of brotherhood, safety and protection. It begins with someone making a young person feel like they finally belong somewhere. This in other contexts would be described as grooming, and that is exactly what it is in this context as well. We have heard of grown men in their 30s, 40s and 50s in Wyndham targeting children as young as 13, using money and expensive items to lure them in. Last year leaders from my local police command met with young people to understand where the pressure came from to commit these offences. They found in these round tables that they held across Wyndham two sources: first of all, a

desire to get street cred, which this government has addressed through our post-and-boast laws and the relentless focus by Victoria Police on that kind of broadcasting of criminality, but it also comes from this issue of adults contacting kids and bringing them into a life of crime.

We have heard stories of young people who have tried to leave, and the police always bring this up with me. A lot of the people they are picking up really do not want to be in that situation, and they are trying to leave, but they do not feel safe to speak to police because they fear the adults that have either recruited them or recruited them through an interlocutor. We hear these stories all the time. In one particularly confronting case, a social worker was told that a young person was threatened that if they left, they would be shot in the head. This is a child being threatened with this. These youth workers told me that they are first drawn in with money, protection and a sense of belonging and then threatened with death when they want to get out. I know the names of these kids; I taught many of them and I taught many of their older brothers and sisters, and it pains me that this is the situation that we see in Wyndham.

Accountability cannot stop with the child who is caught committing the offence. We have to look further up the chain. We have to hold accountable the adults who target them, recruit them and deliberately draw them into serious criminal activity. That is why the changes in this bill matter so much, to make it crystal clear. I think it was reported in the news at the time when we announced these changes last year that some of these leaders of organised crime groups, some of them operating in the western suburbs, said that they were absolutely stuffed, to use more parliamentary language than was described in the article. The act of recruiting a child into serious crime is itself a serious wrongdoing, and the adult responsible should face serious consequences.

I want to briefly address the Liberals' thought bubble of an amendment. They make out as if there are not consequences for children recruiting on behalf of adults. This is not true. In fact in the Crimes Act 1958 sections 321G and 321GA go into incitement of a child who may not be criminally responsible and incitement more generally. If you direct, command or encourage another child to engage in criminal activity, you may be charged with other offences such as incitement. The maximum penalty for incitement corresponds to the maximum penalty for the underlying offence. For example, if someone is found guilty of committing arson, it would carry a maximum penalty of 15 years imprisonment. It is disappointing that those opposite have not done their homework before offering such an amendment to the house.

I have spent much of my working life around young people. As a teacher I saw firsthand their potential, their ambitions and just how much of a difference the right support and right opportunities can make. I would like to thank those people who not only work on the front line with Victoria Police and our youth crime taskforce, our proactive unit, and the embedded youth outreach workers that work with the Youth Support and Advocacy Service and Victoria Police to help those kids who find themselves in these situations, where they do not feel like they can get out, and help them find ways to get out of these offending cycles. I would like to thank those workers from the violence reduction unit, who are now set up at Manor Lakes, operating from Manor Lakes College on many programs to help address and intervene early, a program that many of us on this side are quite proud of. This nation-leading program – nay, world-leading program – was rolled out here in the western suburbs of Melbourne particularly.

I saw that potential, the ambition and just how much of a difference the right support and the right opportunities can make. I remember a particular case of two young people who were caught stealing a car and driving it through Melbourne. I cannot say too much because I do not want to identify them, but the work with that early intervention – getting them in front of the Westjustice lawyer and getting them to work with the counsellor to work through why they did it, who they were connected to and what pressure they were under to do it – was so important to turning their lives around, and it is great to see those young people completing courses in education out in Wyndham. The people growing up in Werribee today deserve exactly the same as what I grew up with. I commend this bill to the house.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:05): I rise to speak in relation to the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026. I think it is probably fair to say it is sad where we are today when it comes to crime here in Victoria that we have to be debating this bill. I note, listening to the government speakers and reading the second-reading speech, there is a lot about the fact that they are trying to be tough on the adults that are causing these kids to commit crime. We all agree that if adults are working with children to commit crimes, there should be penalties in place, but I think we need to take one step back from there.

One of the issues we have here in this state is that these young offenders who are particularly violent and particularly aggressive and do particularly terrible crimes, with, at the moment, the arson attacks probably one of the main ones to focus on – it was not happening in 2022. It was not happening in the beginning of 2023. So what changed? Well, I think the change that we need to really look at with this is the fact that the Labor government weakened the bail laws here in this state and took away the offence of committing an offence whilst on bail. Therefore it took away the step-up when people were applying for bail, particularly young people and they were getting bail more often here in the state. Over time there was a quite a clear message that young people could commit crime and go home at the end of the day, every day, for every crime they committed, and it almost did not matter what crime. Then what we saw was the front page of some of the newspapers in town talking about some young offenders. Obviously, we are very cautious – we do not want to name some of those young offenders because they do have that protection – but some of those offenders were getting up to 350 or 400 crimes committed. It was up to 50 or 60 times they were getting bail. Let us be honest, nobody in the world – actually probably one or two people, but very few people – would think that is okay. But I am not interested in those very few people that think that is okay writing laws around crime here in this state –

Jade Benham: Or their opinions.

Brad BATTIN: Probably true. I am not really caring about their opinions anymore, because the opinions I care about are the victims', because every time someone got bail and went out and reoffended, not only was there a new victim but the offender felt more empowered to do more crime or worse crime. We saw how even the theft of a motor car – whilst that is a pretty serious crime – at the time was probably at the higher end, but then we saw young offenders going into homes with machetes, we saw young offenders doing violent crime in stores for theft, we saw the ram raids and we saw the firebombings, and we are talking a couple of hundred-plus firebombings here in this state. Now, this is not the issue across Australia which people will try and paint it to be; this is a Victorian problem. You can see the dramatic increase in the government's own statistics from the independent agency and the dramatic increase from March 2023.

Now the government is in panic mode, because do you know what will happen in 2026? In 108 days there is an election, and there are a lot of people over there that have gone, 'We're in a bit of trouble here. We might lose our seat.' What is more important, losing your seat or fixing the crime crisis? Well, the answer is pretty obvious when it comes to Labor. It is about losing their seats, because if it was not, they would have fixed the bail laws or supported our legislation 12 months ago when the problem was increasing and we were saying, 'It's only going to get worse.' It did, and they did not believe us. It just kept getting worse and worse, and everyone from the Labor Party kept putting their head in the sand. All the same people, including the Premier, used to turn around and go, 'Nothing to see here – a little bit of an increase. We can do a little bit better. We could change some things when it comes to the laws. Look, we'll just tinker a little bit with the bail laws. That'll fix it.'

And it did not. We kept saying to them it was going to get worse, and then, unfortunately, in Victoria we saw people die – we actually saw people die from this – and then the government really panicked. Let me assure you, it was not because people died, it was because they were worried about their own seats. They were not worried about the people. They were not worried about the victims. They were worried about the polls. The new Premier came in and said that exactly: 'The reason we changed leaders wasn't because we had more victims, it wasn't because people can't afford homes, it wasn't

because taxes have gone up; it was because of the polls.' That is the sign of one of the most arrogant governments I have ever seen.

Then they get in this place and they say, 'We're going to fix it by bringing in the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill,' but the truth is this legislation is coming in as panic stations at the very end of an end-of-days government who are all about protecting their own seats and not the community. If they were serious about this, then they would actually follow what the Shadow Attorney-General has put in place to ensure that this is a proper bill, to ensure that the recruitment of young people here in Victoria does not become a pyramid scheme and does not become another environment where someone who is 25, 26 years old decides, 'I've got a way to make some money. I can pay kids out a thousand bucks. All I need to do is recruit one. As long as I can get away with that, I'm fine,' and then that kid can go and recruit kid after kid after kid, because let me tell you, that is happening. When we hear about what is happening on the app Signal, which is sending out the message '$1000 to go and burn down a tobacco store. Go and throw a warning out there. Two days later go down, drive your car in there and set it on fire', that is coming from other kids. These kids are going out knowing they can just go to their mates now and go, 'Check this out. Guess what, you can earn a thousand bucks. Come with me. Burn it down. You just hold the camera. No dramas here, because do you know what's the worst thing that's going to happen? We're going to get arrested and we're going to go home that night, and we're not going to worry about it.'

Because the court systems are so delayed here in Victoria, because of the amount of stuff-ups from the government when it comes to the court, they are probably not going to end up in court for probably two years, and when they get into court, the kids are getting smarter now. If you are following the system at all, we are seeing kids now not even bother applying for bail. They actually go in and just plead guilty because now, when they plead guilty, they can walk out with a good behaviour bond for some of the most serious offences I have seen. If you do not believe me, go and look up the court cases recently. The owners of 80 Proof had a factory in Keysborough. The offenders knew they were going to get remanded, so they pleaded guilty and the judge let them go with a good behaviour bond. That is what the problem is here in this state. It is not just about the recruitment; we have sent a message for far too long to a whole generation of young offenders that in Victoria it is okay. That is why we have nearly twice as many cars stolen here as anywhere else. That is why in the whole nation, when we put all the car thefts together from the last 12 months, we had a slight increase in the amount of cars stolen, yet every state but Victoria went backwards. Only Victoria went forwards.

When the government have brought in this piece of legislation, they have forgotten some other things in there as well. Only the Liberals and the Nationals have a true plan to work together to get kids off the street, to intervene early and to not just put in place 'break bail, face jail' but also make sure that these kids actually get a genuine opportunity in life. That is why we are going to put $100 million into working with these young kids. We have looked at programs, whether it is in Cheshire, whether it is in London, whether it is over in Texas, whether it is throughout Europe – programs that engage with young people early, before they end up in the justice system. We have had the programs here in this state. The government cut them. Good programs, crime prevention programs – gone. $11 million that used to be in crime prevention programs – gone under Labor. If you want to know why crime is up, it is not one piece of legislation in the last hundred-odd days before they actually lose government; it is because this government have been so arrogant when it comes to the crime crisis here in this state that they believed they knew better than everyone else – they knew better than the experts and they knew better than the police.

They forced judges to make decisions to ensure that young offenders could get back out on the streets. Well, let me assure you, under a Wilson Liberal–Nationals government, that will not happen again. We will make sure that we deliver the programs, we deliver the police and we deliver the sentencing. We will make sure that the judges quite clearly understand that if a child continues to break bail here in Victoria, they will face jail. In areas like where I live, like Casey, where crime continues to increase by over 10 per cent per year, we will make sure that we can get on top of that and start to see crime

come down. Member for Bulleen, I want your community and my community to be safer, and that can only happen under a Liberals and Nationals government.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (17:15): I am delighted to rise today to speak in support of the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026. This is another important bill, one that introduces a new offence targeting adults who recruit children to commit serious offences, for example, aggravated home invasion or aggravated carjacking. These are important changes, which will continue to build on the government's work around community safety. Community safety remains a priority in my community. It is something that my constituents raise with me consistently when I am out and about doorknocking. It was out in Clayton South over the weekend that I spoke with families about their priorities, about what matters for them and about what they want to see from the Carroll Labor government. I also spoke with many young families in Clayton South near Clayton station, many of whom have children at Westall Primary School and Westall Secondary School, and community safety came through as a really strong priority for this community. That message is clear in Clayton South and across the Clarinda district, and I am happy to see this change before us here today.

Victoria has the most police in Australia, the nation's toughest bail laws and the nation's first violence reduction unit. We have seen some really strong investment in the budget targeted at getting more police officers out from behind their desk and into the street where the crime is. This includes a $62 million investment to recruit up to 200 reservists for administrative duty, which will free up frontline officers, putting more police back in our community where they are needed most. This investment and this legislative work continues so that everybody in my community can feel safe. I do not want anyone in our community to feel unsafe at home, out in public or at work, or anywhere for that matter. This is unacceptable to me and unacceptable to this government. It is for that reason that I am happy to be involved in the debate on our tough bail laws, which put community safety above all else in bail decisions by removing the principle of remand as the last resort for creating the toughest bail laws ever for serious offences, with bail tests that are extremely hard to pass and target repeat offenders for those worst crimes. It is a really important measure, and we can see the result in the remand rate. That is really important because there was and is really a clear expectation from our community on this. As I mentioned, it is one of the most common concerns in our community. It is still one of the major concerns, along with the cost of living, roads, health and education, which are all really important.

We will keep working in particular around community safety, and we will continue to work with our tough bail laws to keep Victorians safe by putting community safety above all and targeting repeat offenders for the worst crimes. This work includes the violence reduction unit, because violent youth crime is hurting families, kids and workers in our community. We are also ensuring that there are serious consequences with our adult time for violent crime laws, which passed Parliament in December. Under those laws, children committing crimes like invading someone's home or injuring someone in a sickening act of violence will face an adult sentence in adult court.

There are no easy solutions, as we all know, to reduce crime, and these are serious consequences for violent crime to protect our community. But we know it is better to stop crime before it starts. Our nation-leading violence reduction unit shows that violence is preventable and not inevitable. The budget backs more community-based pathways away from youth crime, with more than $44 million for the violence reduction unit and other programs, and we are backing the violence reduction unit with $33 million to deliver local initiatives which tackle the root causes of violence through targeted preventative measures. This includes $3.7 million for the violence reduction unit pilot, a New York–style violence prevention initiative here in Melbourne to steer our young people away from violence. Almost $15 million will continue to fund early intervention support for children and young people to keep them in the education system and reduce potential contact with the justice system.

This is a wonderful initiative because we know that our younger generation will benefit and be deterred from offending the longer they stay in our education system. It will deliver a new pathway to help

divert some children away from the justice system before they actually get charged. We have had some really positive crime prevention work happening here in the south-east of Melbourne. I am looking forward to that work continuing and expanding, steering our young people away from crime and violence. These measures are an example of that. These are tough new laws to crack down on child recruitment, with a new offence for an adult recruiting a child to commit a serious crime. This will apply regardless of whether any criminal activity is carried out by the child or not, or even if different criminal activities take place. The offence is the recruitment itself, because that is where the harm begins.

Last year the government also increased the maximum penalty from 10 years to 15 years in prison for the existing offence of recruiting a child to carry out criminal activity. These reforms go even further by creating stronger maximum penalties where children are recruited to commit serious crimes. This is a direct response to organised crime networks increasingly recruiting children to commit offences on their behalf, including arson, aggravated burglary, home invasion and carjacking. If found guilty, offenders could face life imprisonment. This is a serious offence, so key stakeholders have been consulted and have provided technical feedback, including Victoria Police, the Office of Public Prosecutions, Victoria Legal Aid and the courts, and I am sure that this proposal will have broad support in my community in the electorate of Clarinda.

We have many fantastic Victoria Police officers working in the Clarinda district, and I thank each and every one of them for their amazing work in keeping us safe day in, day out. I also want to thank my community for voicing their concerns with me. This feedback is important, and it will continue to drive changes like those we see before us today. As I said, there has been some really significant change over the last year, and this is because the community has set a really clear expectation.

The government will continue to work hard around our tough bail laws, around adult time for violent crimes and around the violence reduction unit, together with Victoria Police and the justice system more broadly, to make sure that everyone in my community and across Victoria can feel safe. That is work we continue with here today by cracking down on child recruitment for community safety. These are important changes. They are changes that will continue to build on the government's work around community safety. Once again, I thank all Victorian police in my community, and I commend the minister for bringing this bill forward. I commend the bill to the house.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (17:24): I rise to speak on the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026 and to say that the Greens oppose this bill. Let us be clear from the outset: adults who exploit children and draw them into serious criminal activity should be held accountable. Children should never be used, pressured or groomed by adults to commit offences. The law already makes it an offence for an adult to recruit a child into criminal activity, and only in December last year did Parliament increase the maximum penalty for the existing recruitment offence from 10 to 15 years. Six months later, for no reason other than that Labor are facing an election, they introduced a bill that creates a new aggravated offence carrying life imprisonment. However, in the bill there is no requirement that the recruiter be part of an organised crime group, profit financially, hold a position of authority, exploit the child, be significantly older, or have any connection with organised crime, for that matter, at all.

The Federation of Community Legal Centres strongly opposes this offence. Its central concern is that it is likely to capture young and marginalised people, including young adults who themselves were recruited and exploited as children, rather than those who control and profit from organised crime. The government has not demonstrated that the 15-year maximum, enacted only months ago, is inadequate, nor has it demonstrated that the problem with organised crime recruitment is that judges lack a sufficiently high sentencing ceiling.

If the real difficulty is identifying and prosecuting senior figures who direct recruitment from a distance, increasing the maximum sentence does not solve that problem. Organised crime networks do not necessarily operate through a senior figure directly approaching a child. A vulnerable person

may become recruited and exploited and then directed to bring in a sibling or a cousin or a friend and then another friend. Think about a group of teenagers – 16, 17, 18 years old – who may not know each other's exact ages. An 18-year-old who involves a slightly younger friend in offending can fall within this offence. That may be criminal conduct, but it does not turn that 18-year-old into the organised crime boss that this government says this legislation is aimed at. Once that young person turns 18, this bill can treat them as the recruiter. They are the person the police can see and the person exposed to a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. Meanwhile, the older person who directed them, exploited them and profits from the offending may still remain at arm's length.

That is the structural flaw in this bill: it risks criminalising people at the bottom of an exploitative structure while doing very little to actually reach the people controlling it. We know that there is an over-representation in youth justice of young people with disabilities and children who have experienced both child protection and the criminal legal system; these are precisely the young people who may themselves be vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation. There is a stark contradiction here: Victoria recognises that some people need the protection and support of a child protection system until they turn 21, yet once they turn 18 that same vulnerable young person can be treated as an adult recruiter and exposed to an offence carrying life imprisonment.

The risks for Aboriginal young people are particularly serious. The government's own treaty statement acknowledges that these changes may lead to more prosecutions and increased custodial sentences for First Peoples, further increasing their overrepresentation in custody. It specifically acknowledges the risks to young Aboriginal adults close in age to the children involved, and yet the same treaty statement confirms that the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl was not given the opportunity to advise on this bill before it was introduced. For legislation of this severity, the government should be taking their lead from the experts who work directly with the people most likely to be affected – the Federation of Community Legal Centres, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal community controlled organisations, specialist Aboriginal legal services like Djirra, youth legal services and organisations working with children in child protection and youth justice.

Just this month, an inquiry report entitled *A Systemic Inquiry to Learn from the Experiences of Children Who Entered the Criminal Justice System before 14*, from the Victorian Commissioner for Children and Young People, was tabled in Parliament, with the commissioner writing:

> There is a substantial body of evidence demonstrating that punitive responses to children do not address the underlying drivers of their behaviour and do not improve community safety over the long term.

The inquiry also recommended raising the age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 14. If the government genuinely wants to disrupt organised crime, it should target the people who control and profit from that exploitation and address the conditions that make children vulnerable to recruitment in the first place. Instead this bill risks catching exploited young people while the people directing them remain insulated from prosecution. It imposes a life maximum without demonstrating why the 15-year maximum that Parliament enacted only months ago is inadequate, despite acknowledged risks of greater Aboriginal incarceration. Children are not recruited into criminal activity in a vacuum. They may be experiencing family violence or poverty, homelessness, disability, trauma or state care. Adults who exploit those vulnerabilities should be held accountable, but this Labor government's capitulation to tough-on-crime rhetoric does nothing to address the conditions that make children vulnerable in the first place. Real protection means intervening before recruitment happens and resourcing services that can reach children before organised crime does.

Life imprisonment is the most severe penalty under Victorian law. Maximum penalties matter because they express Parliament's view about the relative seriousness of offending and they set the upper limit of punishment considered proportionate. The government has identified offences, including murder, home invasion, carjacking, armed robbery, kidnapping and arson, as falling within a new tier, but those underlying offences do not all carry the maximum penalty. Arson, for example, carries a maximum penalty of 15 years imprisonment. Rape carries a maximum of 25 years. Murder carries life. Yet under

this bill, recruiting a child to commit arson could expose a person to the maximum penalty of life imprisonment. The Federation of Community Legal Centres warns that as a result this bill distorts the hierarchy of penalties under Victorian criminal law. This bill also sits within a broader punitive direction in Victorian criminal law – regressive bail changes, expanding remand and an increasing reliance on prison over prevention and rehabilitation. This is a direction that the Greens oppose in the strongest possible way.

This bill is too broad, too punitive and too poorly targeted. It is yet more law and order rhetoric from a desperate Labor government. It will not make our community safer, and it risks sucking exploited young people and their peers into cycles of criminalisation. It imposes a life maximum without demonstrating why the 15-year maximum Parliament enacted only months ago is inadequate, and it proceeds despite acknowledging risks of further Aboriginal incarceration and inadequate consultation with those most affected. For those reasons the Greens oppose this bill.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Renters) (17:33): I move:

> That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:

> That this bill be now read a second time.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (17:34): Isn't the chamber blessed this afternoon? They are going to get 30 minutes of discussion on energy from me, and I love talking about energy. From coal-fired power to solar to batteries to gas, there is so much to talk about when it comes to energy. With this bill there will be a bit of light and shade. Do not worry, I will make sure it is interesting for you. I know the member for Albert Park likes to give some interesting speeches as well. We are in the same boat on this, but we will give it our best shot for a Tuesday afternoon with three sitting weeks left before a state election, won't we? Thirty minutes to go.

The Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026 the coalition does not oppose, but we are going to move a reasoned amendment. I move:

> That all the words after 'That' be omitted and replaced with the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the government releases the strategic review of the Victorian energy upgrades scheme undertaken by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.'

The reason we are moving that amendment – and I am going to come to the specifics of the bill later on; I will speak if I can early on to the reasoned amendment – is because, as it states, the Labor government has prepared modelling around the cost of its plans to remove gas out of domestic supply in metropolitan Melbourne and replace it mandatorily with electricity from 1 March next year. As the member in the upper house David Davis, who is the coalition's energy spokesperson, has said, there has been modelling conducted on this pledge as to what it would cost the average consumer and what it would cost the average householder, and the government will not release it. Mr Davis and the coalition have numerous times sought, both in the chamber and through other means, the ability to be availed of this costing, as you would expect. This is modelling that has been prepared. It will show what this promise will do for household bills, and I think it is all fair that we see what it says. If the government believes in the commitment to phasing out gas, that is all well and good. I have a very different point of view, and so do my colleagues, but if the government believe in that and that is their

commitment, then fair enough. If you have conducted a report as to how much it is going to cost the average Victorian, let us see it. And why wouldn't they show it to us? Of course it is obvious. We know the answer to that. If they will not release it three months before a state election, we can all work it out. I do not think any of us need to be Einstein to work out that the cost to the average consumer is going to be quite great. In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis – and even if we were not in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis – forcing such great and dramatic costs upon the consumer, upon households, is bad policy that will lead to bad outcomes for many Victorians. Mandating policy like this has consequences.

I think from our side of the chamber we are simply saying the reason for this reasoned amendment is that we want to see the details. While we do not oppose the substance – we do not oppose the bill; we will not oppose it through this chamber – we are saying, in terms of the reasoned amendment, we want to see the details and we think Victorians have a right to see these details. Of course I think they do. Why would it be such a bad thing for Victorians to be shown by the government the modelling that says that the government's commitment, which they have been espousing for some years now through numerous energy ministers, is going to be a cost-effective commitment for Victorians, which is why the Labor government made that commitment?

Let us take it on face value that the Labor government's commentary is correct. If it is cost-effective, then what are the details in terms of cost? If it is cost-effective, I guess the question we would ask on this side of the house is: why has this work for plumbers and gasfitters been criminalised? Why would you need to criminalise work and put in huge penalties for plumbers and gasfitters? I know a number of them. In my own family there are a number of plumbers and gasfitters by trade on my dad's side. The concept of saying to plumbers, 'You do this work and you'll be subject to huge legal penalty' is ridiculous. However, that is where we have got to. That is what previous legislation we have debated in this chamber has enacted. If we are getting to the stage that we are providing penalties for tradies who are doing this kind of work, the question is why. If we are shutting off gas connections to new estates and to new major residential towers and permits are having to be taken back out of the department and rewritten because they have got potential gas supply mains brought into those constructions – the department is now demanding those plans be altered to have all that work taken out of them so that they are not put on the domestic gas market even for future connection – we have to ask why.

Again, all the reasoned amendment is asking – if you are doing all of that work, if we are proposing all of that kind of change and if we are going to legislate through this piece of legislation so that we then make these changes without having seen the domestic consumer cost – is why. The reasoned amendment asks that question. If we are going to refuse to say how much these changes will cost households, if there are not going to be any details provided in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, if the government has previously passed legislation that will provide a penalty, potentially a criminal penalty, for plumbers and gasfitters who do this kind of work for any residential or private dwelling, then we have to ask that question again: why would you do all of that and not tell domestic consumers, the domestic market, average Victorians, whether it is a family, whether it is a business or whether it is somebody wanting to invest in our state, what the retail cost is.

The member for Narracan has come in. He is probably one of the very few, if not the last, tradies in this chamber by trade.

John Mullahy interjected.

Matthew GUY: Are there others? Sorry, I apologise. There are. I will leave it to the tradies to argue that out. The basic point is that I do not think the tradies who are doing these works should be penalised. That was a previous piece of legislation, so we will not have that debate again today. But the point is: why aren't we allowing that material to be made public? Member in the upper house David Davis, who is the coalition's Shadow Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, has in fact has taken this debate to VCAT and has sought through freedom of information and through the Victorian Civil

Administrative Tribunal to obtain details of this documentation. Of course, why wouldn't he? I mean, anyone would want to see this, because we are again debating this today, and it has not been released. As he said just a month or so ago, the secret modelling has been paid for by taxpayers. Whether you agree with the outcome or not is irrelevant. It has been conducted, and as Mr Davis has said, it has been paid for by taxpayers. What do the government have to hide in the costings in their regulatory impact statement and decision to ban replacement gas hot water services for more than 1.5 million Victorians? He raises a very, very good question. What does the government have to hide? Why wouldn't the government publicly release this material? Why wouldn't the government want to spruik why it is doing it? Even if the costs were going to be dramatic or high or considerable, if that is what you have been espousing as government policy, which the Labor government has, as have the Greens, about phasing gas out – unlike the coalition, who do not agree with that point of view – then at least stand by what you are saying is a good policy and say, 'This is what our modelling shows. This is the cost, but we think we're doing it for the following reason.' But of course they have not.

One must then question the legitimacy of the government's argument behind it and whether they stand by it or not if they have paid taxpayers money for this kind of modelling then will not release it. Of course it is now just before an election, and we would on this side of the house say that now actually is probably the most important time to release it so Victorians know what they are going to get, because there is a difference on a point of view. The member for Gippsland South in the chamber and the member for Narracan are both supporters, as I am, of Victoria's gas industries, and we believe those industries have got a future in this state, a very strong future. We have a fundamental difference of opinion with both the government and the Greens, who obviously do not agree with that. I accept that. It is politics. I respect that they have got a different point of view. I do not agree with it, but as I am going to say for the 15th time, modelling has been conducted, it has been paid for by the taxpayers, there is a difference of policy going into this election and Victorians deserve to see what the outcome of that modelling is.

The government has taken the opposition's energy spokesman Mr Davis to VCAT. They have denied documents motions in the upper house. They have refused, by freedom-of-information request, to provide any of this material on the public record. Therefore, lo and behold, the government said it is a scare campaign, which I am sure following speakers may say. We are simply asking: what is in it? If you stand by your own policy, how about telling us what the details are. March next year – the 1st, in fact – is when Victorians will no longer be able to install new gas hot water and heating systems to replace existing ones. Even if you have got gas hot water, gas heating or a cooktop, because a lot of the cooktops in particular are older and nowadays, if the halogen lights go, you cannot even get a replacement and you have to replace the whole thing.

That then would say that if a family or a pensioner or someone in the suburbs or in a country town is available for gas, if the cooktop goes and they are told by the plumber and gasfitter, 'Well, you can't replace the halogen light, so you either live without those or you replace the whole system', no, under this system of the Labor government, you have to then convert your whole home system to electricity. Fair enough – that is the government, and it is going to this election with that as policy – sure, so what is the cost? We would say again: you have got the modelling. So what is the cost? What are we saying is the average cost to the average Victorian. The government are keen to spruik their energy – I hear them coming into question time trumpeting their 200 bucks back on electricity or whatever it is. It is a couple of hundred bucks back, but as the member for Narracan has said, it is over $30,000, on some estimates, to retrofit existing homes. The member for Narracan is saying it is over $30,000, but even if, let us say – and he is not an exaggerator – it is a tenth of that and it is $3000 to electrify a home that is currently on gas, $3000 as an up-front cost, go and throw a $3000 cost on a family that is going through a cost-of-living crisis today, paying more for their basic energy costs than ever before, throw in insurance, throw in food prices and all the rest, and that is an enormous amount to expect from people or pensioners, with no discounts when it comes to this kind of infrastructure cost upgrade.

Victorians have got an absolute right to say, 'If you want to institute policy like this, give us the fundamentals on where we stand with this, right? Actually tell us what it looks like.' Actually be up-front with us to say, 'This is what it is going to cost'. Do not hide behind freedom of information or defeated documents motions by a number of the smaller parties outside of the Labor and Greens centre left bloc in the upper house, who have also voted with them to hide this documentation from Victorians. Let us be frank as to what this kind of policy is going to have as an impact on Victorians. We are going to the polls in less than four months – I think it is 109 days. So these questions are going to be all the more pertinent, and why wouldn't they be? There is a difference of opinion. Why wouldn't they be?

We are being very up-front on our side of the chamber. We are not misleading. We are not hiding behind policy. We are being up-front with Victorians to say, 'This is our policy on gas', right? We believe regarding the use of gas, particularly on the domestic market – as we have been saying for the last two elections – that there should be domestic supply caps like they have done through the Labor government in Western Australia. It is a good policy. It has been good policy in Western Australia. It has kept domestic gas prices at a regular level and at a more constant level than the east coast markets. We do not think that all Labor governments have got this wrong. I would go and look 4000 k's west. From our point of view, we have capped wells which should be used, to move into a broader energy debate on this bill. I talk about gas for the obvious reason that there is a market in Victoria. It may not be offshore. Then you will hear the obvious from those on the left side of politics, 'Oh, it's all fracking, it's all fracking', which is absolute, total rubbish. We want to talk about scare campaigns, like the one we saw from the previous Premier. Now we have had three premiers in one term, which has never happened before in Victoria's history.

A member interjected.

Matthew GUY: Not Premiers – never happened in Victoria's history. There was a scare campaign about fracking. There are plenty of scare campaigns that that guy came out with, but that one was probably one of the better ones in terms of ridiculousness. So what we have got is a domestic gas supply market which has been crippled in Victoria when it could have been one which was energising jobs outside of the metropolitan area of Melbourne, particularly in Gippsland – energising jobs for our state's future. We say on this side of the chamber that we will, if we come to government in just 109 days time, be keen to re-energise that market with certainty of policy, not with what we have seen from the Labor government – you know, 'Fracking's bad, gas is bad.' It is completely horrendous; it is horrible. You know, it is trying to me-too the Greens. Then in 2021, after a review, it ran around and said, 'Oh, actually, it's not too bad anymore' – very quietly. Remember that? It said, 'It's not too bad anymore.' Then later in this term, in 2023, the then energy minister, who I note is now retiring, came in and said, 'We're going to review and push back the gas ban in domestic homes to 2027.' So it was horrendous, then it became bad and then it became bad but delayed. Now they are not sure at all, but they are not going to tell you how much it is going to cost anyway until after the election should they be re-elected.

We on this side of the house believe in certainty of policy when it comes to gas. We believe that domestic gas supplies have been positive for our economy historically. They have been good in terms of jobs and in terms of cost of energy, and, more to the point, we believe that gas has been good for our state historically and can be good for our state in the future. We are going to reinvest in our gas supply and gas markets, get jobs back to regional Victoria through gas industries, bring prices down for domestic gas in our metropolitan areas and put caps on to ensure that we have got domestic gas markets similar to Western Australia that keep prices down for Victorians, as opposed to the Labor Party, which wants to scrap it all, criminalise plumbers and gas fitters for installing it and make sure that you will pay tens of thousands of dollars to go from gas to electricity by force. We are going to scrap all of that because we believe in gas – simple. So you know where we stand, at least, and the chamber knows where we stand on this side of the house, and Victorians know where we stand going into an election in 109 days time. All of this stuff will be a moot point should there be a change of

government, because we believe in ensuring that our energy industries are there for the future, not part of the past.

After a long talk about gas for 18 minutes I want to talk about our broader energy industries and how important they have been to Victoria. I think in this state we have allowed the demonisation of our energy industries and those who have built our state's future off energy, including my own family and many members in this chamber who have got family out in Gippsland, who have worked their guts out to build our state post war, through the Latrobe Valley in particular and broader Gippsland and also through other parts of our state, like Mortlake, where there is a gas power plant, the Newport 500-meg gas power plant. Energy is something that has been a driver of jobs for our state for many decades, and the energy industries have been drivers of jobs in our state for many decades.

I heard earlier in debate in the chamber people talking about Loy Yang and the Loy Yang power station. Loy Yang A and B together, at just under 3500 megawatts, are not just the largest power station in Victoria; those two combined, A and B, are the largest power station in Australia. The member for Morwell, the member for Narracan and the member for Gippsland South know this, as most people should know it, because when you talk about the closure of these power stations, you are not removing something that is innocuous from the Victorian power supply grid. We were a net exporter of power just a decade or two ago. We used to export power. In fact Victoria supplied the majority of South Australia's power before the Labor government over there ceremoniously blew up a power station – was it in Port Augusta or Port Pirie? They blew it up. That has gone well, because now South Australia, like Victoria, is a massive net importer of power, particularly baseload, particularly in peak demand. It never used to be. And of course what has happened to South Australian domestic prices of energy is the same thing that has happened to Victoria: they have gone through the roof.

When you do not value energy industries, you do not value those who work in them, you do not value the historical significance, you do not reinvest in them, you do not mandate that private companies reinvest in them with new technology to guarantee those jobs, to guarantee those towns' futures that rely on them, to clean up some of the industries they have relied on and to look at new generation and methods of generation for those towns to reinvest in those towns, then you get to the circumstance we have got to in Victoria in the last decade where we now have uncertainty surrounding our energy supply industry, which we should never have had. But we have had a Premier for eight years who played politics with it, an imitation of that version for another three years who did not know what politics to play with it and another bloke for two weeks who cannot work out if he supports the last 11 years or not. He does not know if he is supporting those 11 years or not supporting those 11 years. One day he says, 'I was a big supporter of those 11 years,' and the next day he is not a big supporter of those 11 years. He is this, he is that. He does not know; we do not know either, and nor do Victorians.

What we know on this side of the chamber is we back our energy industries, and we back the people and the towns who rely on them and work in them. I know the speakers on this side of the chamber who will get up, not just from Gippsland but south-west Victoria as well, will say the same thing as me: we will invest and reinvest in these towns, and particularly as the member for Gippsland South will say, through re-energising gas and our gas industries, which have the potential to re-energise so much and – I say again, because of sentimentality – particularly so much of Gippsland. The ability for us to decentralise jobs, to bring jobs to these new markets, to get some of these towns with not just existing workforces but for companies to reinvest through tertiary work for kids to have a future in those towns, for future families to have options to stay in those locations, for industry to locate to those locations with cheaper electricity, cheaper availability of gas – no, that is not on this government's agenda. That is not on their agenda, because Labor cannot be, Labor will not be and Labor are not interested, and this side of the house is. We are interested in reinvesting in those towns.

The Latrobe Valley, as I have said many times in this chamber, was built off energy. We are not suggesting going back to opening new coalmines – we are not suggesting that. But what we are saying is that you have got to respect where these towns have come from; you have got to respect the work that has been done there. My grandfather worked in Yallourn – Yallourn A, Yallourn W. I have been

down and driven a dredge in Yallourn W, and my uncle was a foreman. It was in the 1980s. It was some time ago. I suspect that workplaces were very different back then. I was moving the dredge as it went through the old town of Yallourn – I might add, where my parents were married and I was baptised, so I was probably digging up the Yallourn Methodist Church, which is not a good thing. But the point is that Gippsland was founded off those industries, and we all on this side respect those towns, the work that so many of those towns have built, their history and the historical basis that the brown coal industry committed to the economic success of Victoria. That I think provides all of us with a focus to reinvest in those towns and to reinvest with sincerity back into the valley. That does not mean saying that we can power metropolitan Melbourne, with great respect, off wind energy or solar. I support solar. I have got it at home. I have got an electric car – I support all of these things. But we need to be realistic. We are not powering a city of 5.5 million off wind power and solar – we are just not. We need baseload power, and we on this side say gas has got to be an important part of that.

The concept of saying, 'We can just shut Yallourn W, and we're not sure what's going to come next,' is absolutely ridiculous. To shut it with no plan B, taking 2500 megs out of the system with no plan B, is where the government's at – no plan B. If it is 2028 with no plan B for the second-largest economy in the country, no plan B for the largest contiguous metropolitan area in Australia, as it is nowadays – they just say, 'No, no, no. It's all off. It's okay. We're going to put wind farms up in Ararat, and that's going to fix the problem.' That is absolutely ridiculous. Wind is fine and wind has a place, battery has a place, solar has a place – they all do. A mixed energy grid system is absolutely positive, and there are no arguments from this side on it. But you have got to be realistic about what you have got to power, and you must be realistic about where it leaves your state, because all of us, both industry and the domestic market, need certainty of policy. I think the point of all of this is that we have not seen certainty; we have seen mixed rhetoric with no certainty of policy from the current government for the last decade. What I mean by that is the rhetoric to demonise everything about our historical energy system has been sincere from the other side, until it changed, as I said, in about 2021, changed again in 2023 and faces an uncertain future in 2027 should the government be re-elected, because they are changing their goalposts all the way through. Credit to the Greens: they have said, 'Shut the lot down,' and they have never not had that point of view. I think that is even more ridiculous, but at least they have been consistent in being ridiculous. The government started ridiculous and now is bordering on absolutely ridiculous, mildly ridiculous and just fanciful. On this side of the house at least we are saying all of those positions need to be wiped off the table and we need to start again and have certainty when it comes to gas. At least from this side of the chamber we have been consistent, and we will continue to be consistent.

The VEET bill 2026 has 146 clauses and seven parts. Allow me to go through those 146 clauses.

Wayne Farnham interjected.

Matthew GUY: I just thought I would try that one. I was just seeing how many people were still listening – interestingly, only the member for Narracan, but he is a mate of mine, so I am sure he is. At 146 clauses, I am sure there is much to debate.

I make the coalition's comments and I make my comments on this by just saying again, in conclusion, from this side of the house we absolutely think that Victorians need certainty of policy when it comes to energy. This is a critical area of government policy going into the next decade. It will continue to be a critical area of government policy. Our economy, our economic confidence and people's willingness to invest in our state will depend heavily on this sector of governance, which is energy policy. If we do not have that right, if we do not have the consistency of message right, then people will not invest here; they will look to Queensland, where they have got a consistency of message. Therefore from this side of the house we believe our consistent messaging around ensuring we reinvest in gas and have a mix of policy through encouraging particularly domestic solar, through wind projects where they are closer to existing infrastructure and of course through battery technology where it is reasonable and can be availed is absolutely important as part of our energy mix, but we cannot sacrifice base load power for the sake of politics when we have nothing to replace that base load power. That

would be crazy policy, irresponsible policy, policy of the Australian left wing. The Liberal and National parties believe that gas has an important role to play in energy generation into the future and in household supply. It will keep costs down for the cost of living and energy consumption in our homes, and we are absolutely supportive of recharging and re-energising our gas industry should we come to government in just four months time.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (18:02): I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a contribution to the Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026. In the 30 minutes that the previous speaker had the opportunity to hold the floor he spoke at length about a range of different policy positions that have of course been looked at by this state and by the country. What the member spoke about in terms of policy consistency and certainty was policy consistency around the energy market, and he failed unfortunately to mention that period between 2010 and 2014 when there was a vacuum in this state when it comes to these matters. He failed to mention the near on decade from the previous federal government when we had the opportunity to seriously consider, invest in and advance the energy needs of our country – not just our state but our country – and we had nothing of the sort. Where I think the previous member landed was on a recognition that investing in solar and wind and all of the technologies that I will come to within this piece of legislation and the transition is not only the responsible thing to do but the right thing to do when it comes to the hip pocket of Victorians and of people right across the country.

I have just a couple of things to put on the record. The agenda that our government has brought to the table will create 68,000 jobs by 2040, 70 gigawatts of solar, wind and battery –

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Josh BULL: Gigawatts, member for Frankston – the very fine member for Frankston. Seventy gigawatts of solar, wind and battery have been publicly announced, and of course there is more to come. That transition is serious and significant.

Before I go to some of the mechanisms and changes that are made with this piece of legislation in terms of both the review and the practical sense of the way that we are managing these matters, I do want to take up some of the thoughts from those opposite who, when they get the opportunity to come into this place, make all sorts of statements about what should be happening and what could have happened. The practical reality is that when they get the chance, whether that be from a federal level or those sort of measly opportunities from a state level, to make some serious reforms that go to protecting the environment and making sure we are driving down energy prices, they are of course driven by ideology. They put those ideologies in place and effectively just leave a policy vacuum. This of course is in stark contrast to what we have seen from this side of the house for more than 12 years: a strong, sustained and significant investment in renewables. We took the opportunity at each and every budget and in each and every review, initiative and project to provide for the community to come on board from a household perspective, a small business perspective and for larger scale operations and to go to these matters in a way that works towards that transition and invests in a cleaner, better future, adds more energy to the market and makes sure we are doing that in a responsible and sustainable way. We did not hear any of those points earlier in the previous contribution, but we did by the end. I think that if there is any part that we can agree on, it is indeed that the policy settings of this government are important and do matter when it comes to driving down the cost of energy and ensuring that we are providing a better future for all of us and indeed our youngest Victorians.

The changes are extensive and the changes that are in this piece of legislation are of course the matters around the strategic review, which was funded out of the 2024 budget, to ensure that the scheme remains fit for purpose and modernises as we continue through the transition. They make for the seamless and better functioning of the Victorian energy upgrades program and of course make sure we are providing for those amendments, whether that becomes the work done around certification and certificates or all of the work that is done to modernise those appliances and provide for solar, hot water or heating and cooling – those opportunities are really important.

I think it is fair to say that as members move around their local electorates and talk to people within local communities, we know and understand the importance of providing for more efficient and better energy use within the home. We know and understand that those needs have of course changed over time. Making for changing dynamics within the household and also a changing economy at a time where people are indeed feeling those cost-of-living challenges each and every day is something that is very, very important. We remain committed to a sense of practicality and a sense of purpose when it comes to these matters and to making sure we are continually improving for residential owners, small businesses and of course large-scale businesses as well.

The work that is being done in this space stands in stark contrast, unfortunately, to what we saw for that lost near-decade of failed energy policy from the former coalition government. There was of course a time when the nuclear policy was taken to the federal election, and that did not go so well. There was of course a time when we could not really get anything out of Canberra when it came to the renewable energy market. I am really pleased that we as a team, a collective and a government charted our own course and set forward a series of programs and initiatives to take this state forward. And to see the take-up from a household level, Deputy Speaker, as you are moving around your local streets, and member for Footscray, you as well, and all members on this side of the house, having that opportunity to see the community embrace that and take up the technology that is rapidly advancing is really important.

We have got an opportunity to be able to do that, whilst not disregarding the fact that there is a transition that is needed and there is a practicality that needs to be brought to these matters. We do not see that from the Greens political party; we see ideology not driven by practicality, and we see the same thing from those on the right. I am really pleased that we on this side of the house deal with those matters that stand before us in a way that is practical, sensible and evidence based. We talk to engineers, we talk to scientists and we talk to people who know what they are doing when it comes to energy. That stands in stark contrast to both of those outfits that I mentioned earlier, who are in fact just driven by some of those ideologies that really take us backwards.

We want to be here in however many years – 25, 50 or, maybe in your case, Deputy Speaker, another hundred years time. He is a healthy guy. We want to be here in years to come, and we want to make sure that we are providing for the best environment and the best planet that we can. The changes that are involved in this piece of legislation, the matters that I have gone to over the course of this contribution, go to providing for that work, and that is something that is really, really important. It is a hallmark of this government to be able to invest in these matters. What I think we heard from the previous speaker – I did not disagree with all of the things he said. I just disagreed with the way that they were framed in terms of what this government is bringing to the table compared to what we have seen from previous outfits. We remain committed to increasing supply, driving down cost, listening to the experts and making sure that at every single opportunity we will provide for the best energy system, framework and set of regulations that we can. I commend the bill to the house.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (18:12): It is always fun to rise to speak on energy policy in this place and to follow someone like the member for Sunbury, who talks about failure of energy policy and how the Carroll Labor government has done such a wonderful job. Let us just say the Labor government, because we cannot keep up; I have only just got used to saying the Allan Labor government. I do not think Victorian households would necessarily agree that the government has done such a wonderful job when it comes to energy policy when we have seen our energy bills skyrocket for the best part of 12 years, when we have got inflation being driven by electricity cost increases in Victoria, when we have got more people than ever seeking payment plans for their electricity bills and when we have got a government that has failed dismally when it comes to gas. The member for Sunbury was talking about ideological positions on this side. Hello, have a look in the mirror, people over there. Have a look in the mirror about ideological positions that have driven Victoria to the brink in terms of an energy crisis.

As the member for Bulleen talked about before, there are serious problems that we are facing in the next couple of years in terms of lack of energy availability, with Yallourn scheduled to close in 2028 and with the lack of gas supply because we have had 12 years of a government that did not believe in gas for ideological reasons, that would not allow development and that never accepted that gas is a critical part of the transition. The government put all its eggs in the solar and wind basket, all of which it asked to be done in regional Victoria. Frankly, regional Victorians are sick of being asked to carry the can for the energy transition, and time and time again I have said this. We have had enough of being asked to carry the burden. I know there will be those on that side that will say how wonderful a job they have done with all the new wind turbines and all the new solar panels, but they do not have to put up with them in their electorates.

A member interjected.

Danny O'BRIEN: Going on the roof would be a really good idea. In fact, if you would like, you could pick up our policy. We have actually announced a policy to encourage solar on rooftops. There are thousands of hectares of rooftops on factories and warehouses in Melbourne in particular, but also in our regional cities, where you could put solar panels. We have announced a policy to encourage that, to actually make sure that if we are going to have renewable energy, we actually produce it in the areas where it is needed and we reduce the need for additional transmission lines, because that is another area of failure of this government, where transmission lines are seen as just a route to market and woe betide anyone who gets in the way. 'We really don't care,' is what this Labor government says. We have seen that time and time again with their management of it.

I was at the bush summit last year in Ballarat, where both the Prime Minister and the then Premier, the member for Bendigo East, acknowledged that they had failed to properly bring the farming community along with them when it came to transmission lines. The then Premier did that the day after this Parliament passed additional legislation bringing in $12,000 fines for farmers who have the temerity to stop an authorised officer from coming onto their land. If that does not speak volumes about the lack of respect and about the inability of the government to actually bring the farming community and regional Victorians along with them on the journey, well, what does? And it continues under the current Premier, with farmers on the route of the VNI West proposed project in western Victoria in the last week – since Ben Carroll, the member for Niddrie, became the Premier – being issued with their first fines. They are fines that we will repeal. The Nationals and Liberals will repeal those fines because they are anti-democratic, they lack respect and they are absolutely a disgrace to this Labor government. It is a Labor government that does not care what happens in regional Victoria. It is a government that are only focused on wind and solar at all costs and looking good in the city to make sure that they highlight their green credentials, and to hell with the country people who have to put up with it. That is the approach they have taken.

We have a different view on this side. We absolutely have a different view. On that side, the Labor government proudly promotes its development facilitation plans to get more and more wind turbines and solar panels built. They do that, though, at the expense of the local communities. They have taken away the local communities' ability to appeal against these projects at VCAT. We will give it back, because country people and farmers deserve to be able to have their voice heard. Some over there, and some in the regional areas also, might say, 'But will it really matter?' It absolutely does, because I can tell you from my own experience in the electorate of Gippsland South, the then Alberton wind farm was approved by this government, by the previous Labor government, and the local community took it to VCAT because they said there had been mistakes. VCAT upheld their complaint and that permit was revoked. The minister had made mistakes, the department had made mistakes and the developer had made mistakes that were not picked up by anyone but the local community taking it to VCAT. This mob has taken away the right of farmers to be able to do that. We will give it back to them because those people deserve to be able to have their say.

We will also reintroduce the 2-kilometre buffer zone for wind farms, and if that might have an impact on the number of wind farms we develop, well, so be it, because people need to be protected and their

homes need to be protected. We absolutely need to give regional communities that certainty and that protection. Two kilometres is a fair distance, and it absolutely will be brought back. We will also overturn the compulsory acquisition powers. What a disgraceful effort that was, introduced by the former minister, the member for Mill Park, in the dead of night, literally with 24 hours notice. In an existing bill they added in some legislation that said they can compulsorily acquire your land even before a permit has been approved for a project or it has gone through an environment effects statement. That is the sort of thing that this government is doing to steamroll regional communities. We will not put up with it. We opposed that at the time, and we will repeal that legislation if we are elected. It is not good enough for the government to continue to steamroll regional areas like that.

We will also require audits of farmland before these projects go ahead to make sure we understand the impacts on good agricultural land, whether it is wind, whether it is solar, whether it is transmission lines. We actually need to be making sure we are looking after our farmland and making sure that we are looking after our food producers. This is critical. We have got to do it. We are going to do it for batteries as well, because I know there are those that are concerned about that too. So these projects need to go through the process, and the balance needs to be struck correctly for our regional communities.

Likewise, again we have the government spruiking all sorts of things like offshore wind. Yet when it comes to Gippsland, all the offshore wind is off Gippsland. All the issues will be borne by us. The transmission lines will all be coming through Gippsland. But the government goes and says, 'Well, we'll put the construction port at Hastings.' Here we are again. Offshore wind was going to be the solution to help us when Yallourn energy goes offline in 2028. The Labor government has stuffed it up, because that renewable energy port at Hastings should have been underway by now and should be ready in a year or two's time. Instead the federal Labor government knocked it back. They have not even started work on it yet, and there is no prospect now that there will be any offshore wind produced before Yallourn closes. Frankly, given the costs that go with offshore wind and the delays that have been caused by state and federal Labor governments, I am sceptical as to whether any offshore wind will actually get off the ground.

We need to have a transition plan. We need to actually understand that we will be in big trouble when Yallourn goes offline in 2028. That is why the Nationals and Liberals are supportive of gas. We need to develop our gas reserves. I was pleased to talk with Woodside Energy over the weekend, who have just taken over management of what were the Esso–BHP offshore gas plants and developments, and I am very optimistic that they will actually do more with the gas that might be available out there and that there are opportunities for a smaller, more lean company to actually get more development out of that. But more particularly, we want to actually develop our onshore and offshore gas reserves – not unconventional but conventional gas reserves – in Victoria. We also want to make sure Victorians have the chance to make a choice. We do not want governments saying you cannot have this appliance or that appliance. That is a choice that the Nationals and Liberals will give back to people. We will develop our gas reserves and get more energy into the market to make sure that we drive prices down. Supply is important and gas is an important part of that, and the Nationals and Liberals will make sure we have it.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (18:22): I rise with pleasure to support the Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026, and I do so as someone on this side of the house putting on the record that we as a Labor government believe climate change is real. We believe that the ongoing burning of fossil fuels across the globe is having an impact and has continued to have an impact on global climate and on global temperatures, generating more extreme weather events for many years, which has only been continuing to compound over recent years, as we have seen the severity of floods, storms and severe weather events wreak havoc across the world, including in our own nation, whether it is bushfires or floods. If you believe in climate change, which we do, you then have to decide to take action and play a role in global efforts to take action to reduce emissions to build a healthier, cleaner and more sustainable community. We

know that the leading cause of carbon emissions for many years has been the burning of fossil fuels, of gas, of oil, of things that compound climate change.

On this side of the house we are honest. We say we believe it and we want to take action, and we have been doing that at a state level, which I will take the house through very shortly as part of this bill, because this bill is one important component of that at the household and local community level. But the question I have for those opposite, for the Liberals, the Nationals and the One Nation coalition that they are intending to form, is: do they believe in climate change? I do not think they do. I do not think I have heard anyone as part of this debate –

Richard Riordan interjected.

Anthony CIANFLONE: It is not about believing me; it is about believing the overwhelming science that has been globally proven. It is a conspiracy theory, according to the member for Polwarth. It is a conspiracy theory, like so many other things, according to them. But this is the contrast that Victorians face this coming November: a government that is serious about taking action on climate change and doing its bit to help reduce emissions and, importantly, help support cheaper and affordable renewable energy, because that is the cheapest form of energy.

Members interjecting.

Anthony CIANFLONE: They laugh when I talk about renewable energy and giving people incentives. They laugh; they think it is an absolute joke, they do. The member for Polwarth has said they laugh when we talk about renewable energy, which is the cheapest form of energy. It is a fact. The wind blows, the turbines turn, and they generate electricity. The sun shines, the solar panels capture that, and they turn it into electricity. This is being reflected through many, many things, which I can take the house through, whether it is through the energy default offer or whether it is through the wholesale price, all of which continue to keep Victoria's energy prices low – the lowest in the country on many metrics – because we are increasing investment. As we increase investment into renewable energy, we decrease the price of people's energy bills. That is a fact.

I take the house to the fact that I have visited many people in my community who have taken advantage of solar homes and the Victorian energy upgrade program, which we are reforming and strengthening today, and the federal government's battery program. Many people are paying zero dollars in energy bills across my community. I visited them with the Premier and with the Minister for Energy and Resources – the member for Mill Park – and a couple of those people are Jennifer and Melvin, who live in Connolly Avenue in Coburg. We had an amazing announcement that we made there in their home when Minister D'Ambrosio and I visited to talk about Victoria having the lowest energy default offer. They had taken advantage of all the various incentives to keep their power prices at record lows.

The other family that we visited was the Ziino family in Gordon Street in Coburg. Michelle, Jason, Rosina, Patrick and Rosemary have done amazing work to refit their homes with clean, renewable energy generation and storage. They admitted they are all paying lower prices than ever, and that is why we are providing incentives for households to make the transition. We know the up-front cost is hard for many people – it is expensive – but that is why we have these programs to help alleviate that up-front cost so they can then reap the long-term benefits.

What do the opposition do in stark contrast to that? They ridicule. They ridicule climate change and they ridicule our incentives that we continue to provide local households. This is also the opposition, when they were last in government, that continued to oppose serious action, particularly between 2010 and 2014, when it came to renewable energy and action on climate change. They voted against extending the Victorian energy upgrades program to 2045. When they were last in government they actually introduced legislation seeking to abolish its predecessor, a move that at the time threatened thousands of jobs and household savings. We would not be here today if they had still stayed in office, because this program would have been ancient history.

The contrast cannot be more stark politically when it comes to this particular issue. We believe in climate change. We have legislated that we want to achieve net zero. We have restored the State Electricity Commission and embedded it in our constitution so those opposite can never sell it off and privatise it again. We have legislated renewable energy targets. We support solar energy, we support wind energy, we support batteries, we support household electrification, and we support the benefits that are associated with each and every one of these initiatives from a climate perspective, a renewable perspective but also a cost-of-living perspective. These are all issues that are intertwined and complement one another; they are not exclusionary to one another.

Those opposite want to talk the big game on energy transition, and they supposedly have the licence when it comes to this issue. It was at the last federal election that the Australian people rejected that proposition – that alternative for nuclear energy. The Peter Dutton nuclear energy plan that was put to Victorian people was outright rejected. The federal Labor government returned to office with a record number of seats, and the opposition Liberal federal leader lost his bloody seat. I mean, how much more loudly can the Australian people speak when it comes to where they stand on energy policy? They do not want nuclear reactors, which those opposite were advocating for. As far as I am aware, they have not ruled out returning to that policy if they should come back to government. Has any one of them ever stood up and said they do not want a nuclear reactor in their community? We know they do not want wind turbines in their communities, but they would rather nuclear reactors in their communities. Common sense just totally fails these guys opposite on so many levels and so many metrics.

We are clear; we are honest here. We are saying this is our approach: renewable energy, reducing carbon emissions and incentivising households and communities to transition to that form of cheaper energy. What is the policy of those opposite? Are they going to return to nuclear energy? Do they want to go to nuclear energy? Do they want to keep and build more coal-fired, expensive power stations in Victoria? Do they want to return to fracking? Where is their policy?

Danny O'Brien: Did you actually listen at all to the previous speakers? Obviously not.

Anthony CIANFLONE: I did, and they did not make any sense. You have no policy. Your policy is to oppose what we as a government are doing in terms of real action. The other reason in all this is because they are held hostage to One Nation. They know they have to cosy up to One Nation because they are –

Danny O'Brien interjected.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Oh, mate, you can come to Pascoe Vale any day. I will buy you an almond latte at Pentridge. I tell you what, you have got to think about One Nation in your community, not mine, Leader of the Nationals. Let us talk about the Greens. I am happy to talk about the Greens when it comes to climate –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Pascoe Vale, through the Chair.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, for your guidance. Let us talk about the Greens as well. Where are they? They are never in this chamber. When they come in this chamber, they come here for a stunt or a TikTok. They talk about data centres. The reason why apparently we need more data centres is because they are the ones generating the demand for the data centres with their bloody prolific social media posting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Unparliamentary language.

Anthony CIANFLONE: The Greens are nowhere to be seen when it comes to real action on climate change. They talk the big game, but let us never forget that it was the Greens that teamed up with the Liberals, the Nationals and Tony Abbott, former Prime Minister, and set back climate action in this country by a decade. They dumped the carbon pollution reduction scheme. Adam Bandt was leading that effort, and he also lost his seat. So whether it is Peter Dutton losing his seat, whether it is Tony Abbott losing the election, whether it is the Greens leader Adam Bandt losing his own seat and

also the state Victorian Greens leader losing at the federal election as she attempted to run for Wills but was rejected, Labor has been consistent all the way through. We believe in climate change. We are investing in taking real action to combat climate change and help people with the transition.

We have brought back the SEC, the State Electricity Commission, which those opposite have opposed. And as we continue to roll out even more investments when it comes to renewable energy, I am proud to say it is the SEC that is helping oversee quite substantial portions of that, because our legislated renewable energy targets are nation leading and jurisdiction leading compared to many other parts of the world as well – 65 per cent by 2030, 95 per cent by 2035, with a net zero emissions target for 2045. And in 2025, last year, renewable generation provided 44.6 per cent of Victoria's electricity, exceeding our 40 per cent target for that year. So, as I say, we can invest more in clean energy, we can support households to transition, we can put downward pressure on power prices, we can increase the jobs and the economic stimulus around the clean energy industry and we can do it through things like this bill here today, which I commend to the chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members, on unparliamentary language, that there are rulings from the Chair on the word that starts with 'b' and ends with 'y'.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (18:32): I rise to speak on the Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026, but before I get into the detail of the bill I do want to make some comment on the member for Pascoe Vale's sort of pixies-at-the-bottom-of-the-garden approach to energy generation, which of course is the mainstay of many of our colleagues opposite, who live in gated little suburbs where there is no solar, there is no wind, there are no batteries – there is nothing generating or keeping the country alive. They tend to gather around coffee shops and imagine the world that could be under their own rhetoric. As we sit here just after 6:30 pm in winter, let us just see how the government's full-on strategy of solar and wind is working as replacement for having no gas and no coal in Victoria, this genius master plan that is afoot by this government after the last 12 years. Well, we can with great certainty say not one solar plant is working right now, at 6:30, in early August in 2026. They have all stopped. There is no solar generating the light to keep this fine establishment going.

Let us look at the wind and a little term that came up at Public Account and Estimates Committee hearings called dunkelflaute. And I suggest to my colleagues opposite that they might get the dictionary out and google a bit of dunkelflaute, because it is the thorn in the side of this government's strategy, that when the sun goes down, we are going to have all this wind to keep us going. Well, let us have a look, because I know in my electorate, unlike my colleagues opposite who have barely got a bloody – I am sorry, I should not say it. They have barely got any generation at all, apart from a bit of rooftop solar on some houses. They are certainly not keeping our hospitals going. They are certainly not keeping our factories going. They are certainly not keeping employment going. They are certainly not processing anything. They are certainly not moving transport all over the country. No, they are not doing any of that.

But for the wind industry that this government has proliferated to an alarming extent in my own electorate – let us be very, very conservative – there is $5 billion just in the top part of my electorate. There is about $5 billion worth of investment. Let us see how that is going at 6:30 on a Tuesday night in the middle of winter. We have got the Dundonnell wind farm, for example, probably operating at about 10 per cent of capacity. Okay, that is pretty useful. We go to Golden Plains wind farm – that is another big one. Let us remind ourselves who owns that – that is right, the IKEA furniture factory, all profits going to Sweden. Ferrari motor cars – they are legendary for their humanitarian and environmental pursuits, so that is all going to Italy. And how is that going? For Golden Plains I think we have granted permits to dig massive holes in the ground. We have dug rock out. We have completely changed the landscape. We have killed off the brolgas. Wow, it is at about 10 per cent capacity. That is pretty impressive. That is going really well. We can go down a little bit further and look at Macarthur wind farm, for a time the largest wind farm in Australia, with a capacity of about

440 megawatts. What is it doing? It is doing 155, a whisker over 20 per cent of its capacity. Well, that is working really well. That is just a little run-through of the ones in my neighbourhood.

Let us have a look at what is actually working at nearly quarter to 6. Who is doing the heavy lifting? Loy Yang B – full bore, flat out, 570 megawatts. Loy Yang A – all one, two, three, four generators are going flat out. Well, that is pretty handy. What else have we got there? We have got Yallourn – the 350 and 375 are going flat out. Every coal generator in the state today, after literally tens of billions of dollars spent on your solution, is going flat out. And part of your solution is to get rid of them all in the next few years. What suggestion do the Einsteins opposite have to replace all that energy in the next couple of years? They do not have a solution.

They have got the renewable transmission line. I have been in Parliament now for the 10 years you have been talking about it, and you have not struck a blow. You have not even got a finalised plan for that yet. Without the Western Renewables Link you cannot get your renewable energy back to Melbourne, but that seems to have been lost on you, doesn't it? You are a little bit lost on that idea. I mean, if you are going to generate electricity out in the middle of paddocks and farms all over Australia, you have got to get it to the city, and you have not even been able to get your transmission lines built. You have not even got the plans ready. You have not even yet properly consulted with the communities about how you are going to do that. It is a flawed, immature plan. In fact some might go so far as to say you have got the year 9 kids on a school project trying to design the energy system here in Victoria, because you just have not done the hard work to make it happen. It is impossible at the rate you are going at.

What is not impossible is to actually allow the private sector and a few others to get the solutions on track that will make a difference. For example, in the last 12 years you have issued one permit for gas exploration. The government of the day have issued one permit. There is gas galore out there, and the infrastructure. That is what you call low-cost energy to market – when the infrastructure is already there so you do not have to go and build new pipelines. The pipelines are already there, and you can access them. All you have got to do is get your pen out and sign an approval. They have done all the environment effects statements, which is something this government has an aversion to when it comes to wind farms and solar farms. We have seen the former minister, the now retiring 'taking the golden handshake' minister, approve some of these projects without even completing the environment effects statement. It is actually an outrage. We have got this government that views the renewable energy industry as if it is owned and operated by and a fully paid-up subsidiary of the Mother Teresa corporation. They believe they can do no wrong and that they are a bunch of saints that have only the best interests of Victorians at heart. Can I tell you, nothing could be further from the truth. They are just big money-making corporations, like all big money-making corporations.

On the Liberal Party side, we have no problem with companies making money and operating for profit; it is a good thing. But this government is under a delusion that with these guys, just because they are importing large 283-metre-high towers from China, it is okay to give them a free kick and that they are somehow spiritually more divine than the rest of us. But they are not. They are just big companies out making profits, and they need to be properly managed and regulated like any other large company in an area as critical as energy supply. So this bill, like most energy bills this government has put forward, does little to deal with the hard issues at play on something as important to Victorians as good, reliable, safe, clean energy, which is something we all want. But we want a mature government to allow that to grow and develop in a sustainable way, and that simply does not happen.

In the last minute that I have, this bill also deals with mine rehabilitation. Unlike my friends in Pascoe Vale and down in South Melbourne and other elite little areas that do not have to worry about these important industries, I have got a coalmine that this government, in its wisdom, closed in around 2015. Now, in that time, not only has the community wanted something to happen to the old coalmine but the former tenant Alcoa Australia have had tens of millions of dollars allocated for rehabilitation and further future use for that space, and what has this government achieved in the now 11 years since that coalmine was closed? Absolutely zip, nada, nothing – no benefit to society and no benefit to the

community. You have got tens of millions of dollars that has been allocated for mine rehabilitation and we have had international groups wanting to repurpose the site for tourism and nature and all sorts of other great purposes that would help reinvigorate the community, and yet this government has not been able to progress a thing.

In conclusion, renewable energy and the transition that we have in our energy sector require a mature government and people that can see all elements, who are working toward the future to make sure the supply is there and who when we are closing up and finishing up with old sources clean up and finish up in a proper, considered way that delivers benefits and long-term outcomes for the community, not half-finished projects going nowhere.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (18:42): What is very evident from some of the displays we have seen today is that those opposite absolutely hate the Victorian energy upgrades (VEU) program. They have always detested it and have always opposed it, and this is just another example of them being renewable energy phobic. It is clearly ideological. They talk about how we should have cleaner energy alternatives, and I do not know exactly what that means, because the member for Bulleen was talking about fracking in the Latrobe Valley. We know that on this side we banned fracking, and we made sure that ban was implemented in the constitution. Fracking and farming do not go hand in hand. You cannot say 'We're all for farmers' and then 'We're going to frack.' If that is the opposition's example of cleaner energy, I am a little confused. I think they might want to revise that, and I have a feeling some people in their seats will not like that either. But maybe I am wrong.

I think the previous member was having a go at Albert Park being somehow elite, but let me tell you, we have a lot of people who live in public housing in my seat. On that note, because of our government I have visited lots of people in public housing, and I have seen where their energy – the gas – has been transitioned to electricity so that they have cheaper energy supply. We actually helped implement these changes, and based on the escalation of gas prices, we can see that our government was thinking ahead of time on behalf of those constituents. So I think we should be a little bit careful about how we are typecasting seats.

I know there are also other constituents in my electorate who are wanting to use their rooftops. I know those opposite think that in our electorates we are all vehemently opposed to having solar and wind in our electorates – wrong. It could not be more wrong, because I have to say I have had a number of constituents regularly talking to me about how they can implement that, whether it is batteries or solar, on their roofs, where they have those big buildings, and if there could be capacity on those roofs to then share the energy with neighbours and so forth. So I think there is a bit of a misconception about the attitude of those in the inner city – and I am just reflecting on where I live, for instance – to renewable energy.

I just want to clarify a few other points pursuant to those interesting opinions, I will say, that were raised opposite. I am not sure there was a lot of fact in them, but I am going to just put it out there that they seemed to be more opinions than facts. The Australian Energy Market Operator have pushed out their predicted gas peak shortfall from 2029 to 2030 due to reduced gas demand because – wait for it – our programs are lowering gas demand. Surely that is a good thing. Are you opposed to that? Do you want us to keep escalating gas demand?

A member interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: Well, yes, it is one choice or the other. There is one way or another you can go with that. I should also say, when we are talking about the acquiring of gas exploration licences, the reason that they are not being issued is because private companies are not actually applying for them, because gas is depleting, as we have been saying. This is a geological question, not an ideological question. I think, again, facts should be the basis upon which we debate these very serious issues. If those opposite are so focused on energy, as they say they are, then perhaps they may want to check the actual residual elements of gas. We are not making this up. Private companies would take

advantage, but those resources are depleting. They are not renewable, fundamentally, and that is part of the incentive – I should say a huge incentive – let alone the fact that we want Victorians to actually save. We are here and we are focused on slashing their energy bills, and hence this is a big part of the imperative to transition.

I will also commend other government speakers who have spoken to the fact that climate change is real, but I think those opposite are climate sceptics, because let me tell you, you only have to mention the word 'wind'. If you just voice it even as the softest and the lowest little note, they freak out – they lose their minds – because they just hate it so much. Yet on the other hand, they really, really warm to the issue of nukes. But let me tell you, if I had the option of a wind farm next to me or a nuclear energy plant, I know which one I would be choosing, because in the event of an incident, one is absolutely catastrophic and takes generations to fully recover – if ever. Having seen a number of factual replications – for instance, the Fukushima Netflix series; I could not believe how bad that was – once it happens, you cannot take it back. People say, 'Yes, but if they'd done this and they'd done that' – no, no, no; we have to be really realistic about the danger that is posed by nuclear energy. We do not gloss over it on this side of the house. We also know that having had those catastrophic incidents, it takes many, many years to actually set up nuclear power plants, because in order to make them as safe as possible – and I would not use the word 'safe' – it just inevitably ends up blowing out, even with the small modular reactors. I was part of the nuclear energy inquiry into changing where Victoria sits in terms of the exploration of uranium in this state. I have to say it was almost ironic that halfway through the inquiry one of the SMR manufacturers was wanting to launch, but oh no, it all went very bad because they had another setback, and many, many years later these wonderful SMRs that everyone loves the idea of are still not commercially viable. So when you are talking about nuclear, you might want to have a few runs on the board and know that it is a proven entity. When we are talking about SMRs, they are not where they need to be.

The other thing I want to say is that I think the opposition might be underestimating Victorians as well. It is almost insulting them, I should say. The VEU is the largest energy efficiency scheme in the country and has helped more than – get this – 2.4 million households and 180,000 businesses to become more energy-efficient and saved over 96 million tonnes of carbon emissions in the process, saving Victorians on their bills every year. I do not think 2.4 million Victorian households have got it wrong. If you listen to those opposite, you would say they had, but I think there is a little bit of wisdom – actually a lot of wisdom – circulating there, because Victorians can see for themselves the benefits, and they also care about their kids and future generations.

I think we should give our fellow Victorian constituents some credit for their investment and their faith in the Victorian energy upgrades scheme. In 2025 alone more than 147,000 households and 13,000 businesses – are they all wrong as well? I do not think so – received discounted energy-efficient products and services through the VEU. Instead of mocking and jibing at the VEU scheme, maybe go out there and listen to some of the Victorians who have actually benefited from this. I have certainly had the pleasure of visiting some in my seat who, whether they have upgraded to the heat pumps or invested in battery technology through the VEU scheme, are really, really happy about it. They know on the one hand they are saving money, but they are doing something really terrific for the planet as well. I should say in 2025, in the same year, the VEU program cut Victoria's emissions by 6.9 million tonnes and delivered more than 340,000 discounted energy-efficient upgrades. More than 70,000 households accessed discounted heating and cooling upgrades, a record uptake under the VEU program. In the same year 32,000 households updated their gas hot water systems through the program. Again, 32,000 households – I do not think they have got it wrong; I think they have got it right.

I do want to pay deepest respect to the former Minister for Climate Action and Minister for Energy and Resources Lily D'Ambrosio. She had to stand up to these fossil fuel fools, I should say – fossil fuels and fossil fools – for many a year, but she withstood that pressure. She used science and also the market to back it in, because, guess what, when we are actually talking about –

Members interjecting.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes, that is right. There is actually money to be made in renewables. But also the market is actually what helping us get out of coal; the market is what is driving that. Instead of just saying it is the government – although there are obviously environmental benefits to transitioning from coal to cleaner energy – the market is driving this. Those opposite claim to be the party of private enterprise, but they do not want it when it comes to energy – 'No, we'll just ignore the businesses that own coal operators et cetera. We'll ignore them on that point, because that's inconvenient. We'll pick it out when it suits us.' Well, facts are facts, and I am so pleased the VEU is going strong into the future.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (18:52): What an afternoon it has been. I rise to talk on the Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026 going through at the moment. As the member for Morwell, I have three coal-fired power stations in my electorate. I also have the home of the much-vaunted SEC in Morwell. So a lot of the stuff that has been spoken about by members on their feet previously is in my heartland. There are some on the other side that have used a lot of facts and figures that may have some truth or may not have any truth, because you can make figures do and say what you would like them to. I could say that coal, as in lignite, actually comes from trees, which is a renewable product, over thousands of years. So if we want to try and use facts and figures to confuse the situation, we can try and do that in that way.

In the electorate of Morwell in Latrobe Valley, as I said, we do have coal-fired power stations. We will have Yallourn coal-fired power station, which currently provides 22 per cent of our electricity in Victoria, shutting in under two years now. With the transition into renewables, the government in the four years I have been here has been telling us that once the coal-fired power stations shut we will have enough energy in the system. That was all well and good, but it seems to have stalled. Now, when I talk to our energy providers – I do go to Yallourn and I do go to Loy Yang A and Loy Yang B and actually stand in the control room and see where the power comes from and where it is going to, because we do still provide energy to other parts of the state – about what the shortfall is going to be when we lose 20 per cent of our energy system, they have a different aspect on what the government is saying.

We can stand here and we can throw barbs at each other from across the room, but what we are going to find out for certain, come the middle of 2028, is who was right and who was wrong, because at the moment our renewable catch-up, whether it be offshore wind – some of these offshore wind towers that we do talk about are taller than the Rialto building. The Rialto building stands at 251 metres tall, and we are talking about wind turbines that are over 300 metres tall. Currently there are no ships made in the world that can carry the proposed offshore wind components that we do need. We were talking about having them come out of the Port of Hastings. We do not know if that is going to be the case. It could come to fruition that the ships for our offshore wind that is going to help Victoria are going to be coming out of Tasmania, which does not really make any sense at all. There is a long way to go, and we have a short, short, short timeframe, which is ticking down, to see who is right and who is wrong. Unfortunately, with these short timeframes that the Labor government has put on, we have painted ourselves into a corner.

We have generated power for over a hundred years in the Latrobe Valley, and we will continue to do it for another hundred years moving forward, because we have all the infrastructure there, we have the power stations and we have the start of the transmission lines, which feed into metropolitan Melbourne, so we have all the components there. We are going to be using coal-fired power stations into the future, with Loy Yang A and Loy Yang B. Loy Yang A is running until 2035, so we do have another nine years before that one shuts. That is why we will be having to rely heavily on those coal-fired power stations until they do shut.

One of the parts of this legislation which I would like to talk on is part 6, clauses 141 to 145. I might be the only one that is going to talk on this. It is the extended rehabilitation and bond obligations to

former authority holders. This takes into account Hazelwood mine. I was at Hazelwood mine late last week, and we were actually talking about the rehabilitation of the mine. We all talk about transitioning out of coal-fired power stations, but on the flip side, which we do not get a lot of rhetoric on from the Labor government, there is the actual rehabilitation of the mines, because we need to return them to what they were as we speak. One of the issues with the environment effects statement on the Hazelwood mine at the moment is that they are still waiting for it to be passed here in Parliament. ENGIE, who are doing the rehabilitation of the mine, are getting very close to the point where they have actually done a lot of mine rehabilitation. I am not sure if you have been past the old Hazelwood mine site. It is absolutely massive. The amount of work they have done is a credit to them so far. But the stalling of the EES is going to make it very hard for them to keep the workforce and to continue that work. Even though we are talking on energy and resources here today, we do need to turn an eye to make sure that the rehabilitation of the mine does not get caught up with the election and slowed down. It does not matter which side wins government, we need to make sure that that EES travels along as prudently as possible so works can continue on the mine.

Turning my attention with what little time we do have left to the bringing back of the SEC, I have got this beautiful, big, shiny building in Morwell with limited staff members, and we really are flummoxed a little bit about what it actually does provide for our community.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Youth crime

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (19:00): (1759) My adjournment is for the Minister for Police at the table, and the action I seek is for the minister to intervene to curb violent youth crime on our streets. Victorians are reeling from the tragic death of good Samaritan and hero Van Viet Truong. I promised his community that I would tell his story to honour his life and remember him.

Van Viet Truong was a pillar of his community: a small business owner of over 30 years, a husband, a father and a grandfather, someone who came to Australia as a refugee to seek a better life. Mr Truong was allegedly attacked in broad daylight by a group of youths when he tried to help a nearby trader caught in a scuffle over allegedly stolen items. The alleged attackers circled Mr Truong and began to punch him in the head multiple times. Mr Truong was dragged to the ground, and his head hit the ground. Witnesses described hearing a cracking sound as the group continued to hit Mr Truong. A witness noticed that Mr Truong was changing colour and not moving and had bubble sounds coming from his mouth before witnesses pleaded with the group to stop. Witnesses said the attack continued for minutes after that before one of the group said, 'Run, run.' Days after this horrific, senseless attack, Mr Truong succumbed to his injuries and lost his life. What was the penalty for the young people allegedly involved in this crime? One was charged with manslaughter and three others were granted bail, with two deemed that they did not pose an unacceptable risk to the community if they were released. To make it clear, there are now three youths who allegedly bashed an innocent man to death on our streets in broad daylight who are free on bail and free to roam our streets because of the weak laws, thanks to this Labor government. Labor ought to hang their heads in shame.

I think of other innocent victims, like the heroic Aidan Becker, who was fatally stabbed at Mernda train station in March this year after stepping in to save a 14-year-old boy from being attacked and robbed by a group of youth offenders. He died at the scene. I think of innocent Chol Achiek, aged 12, and Dau Akueng, aged 15 – viciously murdered, while walking home from a basketball game in Cobblebank, after being ambushed by masked youth offenders armed with machetes and knives. How is it that this is where Victoria is at? How is it that our state has come to this? How is it that children and innocents are no longer safe on our streets? Under Labor, Victoria's crime rate is the worst it has

been in history, and the Labor government have gone from full-blown denying it to just burying their heads in the sand. Their inaction is useless. They have no plan to fix it. The Liberal–Nationals have a comprehensive plan to fix it and make our community safe again.

Pascoe Vale electorate road safety

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (19:03): (1760) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the ongoing investments the Victorian Labor government has continued to make to improve local road safety across my community of Merri-bek, including along Bell Street through Coburg, from Elizabeth Street down to the Tullamarine Freeway. As many of you know, the Bell Street corridor is a major east–west arterial road connecting the inner northern suburbs with the Tullamarine Freeway and the Eastern Freeway. Slicing through the centre of my electorate, Bell Street experiences almost 50,000 vehicle movements per day and is one of the busiest arterials on the state's network. That is why the Victorian government has been taking real action to improve safety along Bell Street, including via the future opening of the North East Link, which will connect the Western Ring Road, Tullamarine Freeway and Eastern Freeway, alleviating pressure on east–west commuting on Bell Street once opened from 2028; the removal of the dangerous level crossings at both Bell Street, Coburg, and Bell Street, Preston; the delivery of the new active transport and recreational crossing that accompanies these new level crossing projects; and the redesign of the Tullamarine Freeway for safer and separated traffic flow from Bulla Road and Bell Street. We are improving safety for Coburg Primary, St Paul's Primary and Coburg High families via the expanded 40-kilometre safer school speed zone from Pentridge Boulevard to the Bell Street bridge and Elizabeth Street, the installation of seven new electronic variable speed signs through the corridor, the installation of new speed humps at Elm Grove and Urquhart Street and much more.

However, notwithstanding these uplifts, there remains more to do throughout numerous portions of the corridor. Local school communities and households would greatly welcome throughout the corridor consideration of generally safer speeds and enhancements for pedestrians and vulnerable road users; increased and ongoing measures to make Bell Street bridge safer; delivery of pedestrian-operated signals on Elizabeth Street, further north of Bell Street; enhancements at the Nicholson Street crossing intersection and the tram route 1 terminus; better signage out the front of Coburg High and McDonald Reserve; road safety cameras, including directly out the front of Coburg Primary on Elm Grove to calm the traffic and better protect the schools two campuses on either side of Bell Street; Merri-bek council to ensure a permanent school crossing supervisor presence at Coburg Primary on Bell Street and Elm Grove; the need for a pedestrian crossing or zebra crossing connecting Urquhart Street over Elm Grove for Coburg Primary families again; new pedestrian crossings somewhere between the Coburg Aquarium crossing and the Sussex Street intersection, which has long been a pedestrian crossing desert; enhancements along the corridors adjoining residential streets to calm vehicle turns and mitigate against rat-running; and further improvements to better prioritise vulnerable road users at Bell Street's main intersection crossings, including at Sydney Road, Hudson Street, Coburg Aquarium, Sussex Street, Melville Road, Turner Street and others.

As part of this I would particularly like to focus on the Bell Street intersection at Cumberland Road, where we have experienced a number of increasingly dangerous and concerning incidents, the most concerning being on 21 July this year, when a local couple narrowly avoided serious injury after a car crashed through their bedroom wall just after 6 am. I recently visited the couple in their home, Naresh and Divya, who showed me just how lucky they were, with a car crashing through their bedroom wall and stopping mere centimetres from their bed as they woke in shock. They have raised serious concerns and would welcome the Department of Transport and Planning and the minister pursuing a number of urgent actions to help make this intersection safer, including a DTP holistic safety review of the intersection, which should consider and make provision for safer speeds through this portion of Bell Street; a review of the light sequencing and timing at the Bell Street and Cumberland Road intersection; road safety, red-light and speed cameras at this intersection; and much, much more.

Patient transport

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (19:06): (1761) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Health in the other place, and the action I seek is to urgently review the recent changes to the Victorian patient transport assistance scheme and to increase reimbursements in accordance with CPI and inflationary costs. Reimbursements for VPTAS have remained largely unchanged for the past 11 years and are now the lowest in Australia, which obviously disproportionately affects the community of Mildura in the great tropical north-west of the state. Prior to the changes, flights to Melbourne were permitted for patients regardless of their physical condition, and since the changes patients must meet the following narrow criteria – and with over 2 minutes left I am going to read them in for you.

Unless you meet these criteria, the options for you to get to Melbourne are a bus that will take you over 8 hours or a 6-hour car ride, as opposed to a 1-hour flight. You have to be undergoing active clinical management with any of the following: requiring ambulatory oxygen, regular urinary catheterisation, frequent nebuliser therapy or a health condition that will be worsened by or difficult to manage during long private vehicle or public transport travel. I would argue that if you are having to travel to Melbourne or to Adelaide and cannot get that treatment in Mildura, just about any condition would meet that criterion, one would think, but patients are having a hell of a time getting reimbursed under this scheme. You could have musculoskeletal instability or restricted mobility with any of the following: a stabilised bone fracture; a muscular disorder where constant movement during long private vehicle or public transport travel would compromise healing or treatment outcomes – again, any broken bone would meet that, I would think; a spinal cord injury – well, that is common sense; or requirement for significant assistance moving which prevents travel in a private vehicle or on a bus – let us not call it public transport, because we do not have a train, so a bus is the only option, or a plane. Or you could have pain management with any of the following: post-operative pain within two weeks of an operation, a prolapsed or herniated disc, bone metastasis, severe pain that will most likely worsen during a long car ride or bus travel or clinical urgency requiring urgent non-emergency treatment arranged at short notice – well, you would certainly hope so, because at times, particularly during the winter months, there are on average 22 medical flights out of Mildura regional airport. Most of those meet those criteria, but those that do not, who need to travel for specialist treatment that we cannot get in Mildura, are currently getting $45 a night towards reimbursement for their accommodation and 21 cents per kilometre. Does that help any of these Victorian patients in a rural or remote setting? I think not.

Werribee train station

John LISTER (Werribee) (19:09): (1762) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action I seek is for the Labor government to deliver upgrades to Werribee train station. I have used Werribee station my whole life, whether it was going to and from uni in Parkville or travelling to this place. I understand what it is like to move through that station. There has been a lot of noise from certain councillors and aspiring politicians about the station and its aesthetics, but this issue is not one of just appearances. As a Labor member of Parliament, I am here to fight for our most vulnerable in society, so I have taken the time to understand the experience of people with limited mobility and other disabilities using the station. When I met with them, they were not just concerned about the colour of the tiles or the lights. For them, it was about feeling secure and seen. People like Storm told me of experiences waiting for a train and being exposed to the elements and having to get the driver's attention to get the ramp and board the train. I have also met with older people from our local retirement village who use the station daily, and they told me about the need to have clearer wayfinding, brighter lights and signage. Everyone agreed that the station needed some love and attention.

It probably comes from my time as a teacher, but I love a survey. I thank residents for completing my survey on Werribee train station and their experience. Some of the things they told us were that even just a simple, basic upgrade would be appreciated: 'It just needs a refresh/makeover. Thank you.' They

also wrote, 'better signage', 'added brightness in terms of colour', 'renewed walkways', 'greenery' and 'repainting or altering the structures here and there'. One that I liked particularly was, 'Please get the pressure washer out and give the entire area a good wash.' This is how I work: understanding the issue, working in a Labor government and ultimately delivering for my community. I think everyone can agree that we want people to spend as little time as possible waiting for a train or bus. I am proud to have advocated for increased bus services across our most popular routes in Werribee and to bring online the route 194 around the west of Werribee and Wyndham Vale.

This week we saw a huge uplift in train services for the Werribee line, with more peak services to and from the city thanks to the Metro Tunnel project unlocking that corridor. In addition to these improvements delivered by the Labor government, I want to see our terminus station at Werribee uplifted to not only improve the aesthetics and the vibe but also make life that little bit easier for our most vulnerable in the community. In developing this and presenting this to the Minister for Public Transport, I have also had the honour of meeting our Metro Trains staff down there at Werribee station and seeing the conditions they work in, as well as meeting with the Department of Transport and Planning to understand the technical challenges weaving through both the terminus, public walkway, metro services terminating there and signalling services for our broad-gauge and standard-gauge block that runs through Werribee. I look forward to the minister's response.

South-West Coast electorate planning

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:12): (1763) I ask the Minister for Planning to restore transparency and community consultation in Victoria's planning system to give residents of South-West Coast the respect of knowing what is being proposed in their neighbourhoods. Across South-West Coast I am hearing from more residents who are discovering major developments after work has commenced, tenders have been issued and fences have gone up. People are being denied the opportunity to understand, question or contribute to decisions that affect their homes, their streets and their communities. Planning powers are increasingly being centralised in Melbourne, and local residents are being treated as an inconvenience.

Residents from a court in Warrnambool contacted me with concerns about what they believe is a proposed rooming house development in their street. Their concern is not about the occupants but about the impacts. Parking is already limited, and they are asking 'How will 12 more cars fit in?' They sought more information and were told there is nothing available locally. This is typical of this arrogant Victorian Labor government to ride roughshod over our local communities. I have also been contacted by residents alarmed to hear that a high-security compound surrounded by a razor wire topped fence is being built. Surely that would concern any of us. This lack of information has heightened anxiety. Homes Victoria has reportedly been asked to provide information to local residents, yet silence continues. The development is out for tender, but neighbours do not know what is being constructed beside their homes. When people are left in the dark, rumours fill the gap.

Across South-West Coast residents are raising questions about renewable energy projects, battery storage facilities and other significant developments. One resident on the outskirts of Warrnambool contacted me regarding a battery project proposed next to his property. His concerns relate to stormwater run-off, fire risk and the impacts on neighbouring land. These are issues that do deserve answers. Unfortunately, this corrupt Victorian Labor government has increasingly centralised planning powers in Spring Street through fast-track approval pathways and ministerial intervention powers. Developments are being approved by the Minister for Planning. Councils do not know what is happening. Residents do not know what is happening. Local knowledge is being ignored, and voices are being shut out. Whether it is a rooming house, a high-security compound requiring razor wire topped fences, a battery project, a renewable development or another significant project, residents deserve to know what is happening next door before decisions are made. The Liberal Party believe that development can proceed while respecting communities. Consultation is not an obstacle to good planning, it is an essential part of it. Our commitment is to restoring local voices to the planning process

and ensure residents of South-West Coast are informed about developments that will affect their neighbourhoods before decisions are made rather than after construction has begun.

Bellarine electorate early childhood education facilities

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (19:15): (1764) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Children. It was great last week to announce a new kindergarten for the Point Lonsdale community, which will open in 2029. This announcement was in addition to a couple of other kinders and early learning centres we have announced for Ocean Grove and St Leonards. As a former primary school teacher, I know that these kinders are really important for our local community so families can send their children to local kinders and they can be with the children that they will most likely go to primary school with. The Bellarine is continuing to grow, and these have been really welcomed by the community. We are investing in this for kids now but also into the future. We are also ensuring that families can access that three- and four-year-old kinder close to home, and we are really proud to be supporting families with that free kinder roll-out. It is important too that the locations of these kinders are going to be near primary schools and on school sites, so it is really going to benefit the families to do that one drop-off so they could do a kinder drop-off or a daycare drop-off and a school drop-off as well. The action I seek from the minister is to provide an update on how these new early learning centres and kindergartens are going to benefit the growing families across the Bellarine.

Electoral reform

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (19:16): (1765) My adjournment is to the Premier, and the action I seek is for the Premier to amend electoral laws to ensure that ballot papers reflect when a political candidate is a serial party hopper. Victorians deserve to know who is asking for their vote this November. Our state is at a crossroads. Under Labor, Victoria is hurtling towards $200 billion in crippling debt, we have the worst unemployment rate in the country, the worst credit rating of any state and the highest tax burden of any state. So this November's Victorian election offers the opportunity for a fresh start under a Liberal–Nationals coalition. But there are those who appear to be trying to deceive the voters of this state and in particular the voters of Malvern, because you cannot claim to act with integrity and claim to be independent when you are a serial failed political party candidate.

This is the reality behind Christina Zigouras, who is shamelessly claiming to be an independent candidate in Malvern. Here is the truth. In 2014 Ms Zigouras ran as an endorsed Labor candidate for the seat of Sandringham, cosying up to Daniel Andrews in photographs and celebrating her strong Labor allegiance. Having failed to win the election, Ms Zigouras then ran as an endorsed candidate in the 2018 election. But she did not run for Labor this time, oh no; she ran as an endorsed Greens candidate – Labor one election, Greens the next, and not even running in Sandringham but this time for Northern Metropolitan Region on the other side of town. And now Christina Zigouras wants to con the people of Malvern into believing that she is an independent. Nowhere on Ms Zigouras's website or media release does she admit she is a failed serial political candidate for the Labor and Greens political parties. How is that acting with integrity? If this party-hopping, electorate-hopping political grifter is showing integrity, then I am Australia's next top model. And, guess what, I am not.

So I am calling on the Premier to introduce changes to electoral laws. We already have party logos on our names on ballot papers. Why shouldn't a serial party-hopping candidate have all of her affiliations shown: a Labor logo struck through, a Greens logo struck through, a teal logo? I am not sure what that is – maybe a graphic of Simon Holmes à Court's chequebook. I do not know, but whatever it is, we need to ensure that people are not deceived by people pretending to be independent who are in fact nothing but recycled failed Labor and Greens candidates. Victoria's future is on the ballot this November. I am calling for the ballot paper to tell the truth about so-called independent candidates.

Sunshine community safety

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (19:19): (1766) My adjournment is for the Minister for Police and Minister for Crime Prevention, and the action I seek is that the minister join me in Sunshine again to speak with local traders and businesses along with local police and Brimbank City Council to discuss how we can better improve community safety in Sunshine. After the tragic incident that took the life of our much-beloved Van Viet two weekends ago our community in Sunshine is hurting and it is grieving. I would like to acknowledge and I would really like to thank the minister for coming down on such short notice – I think it was about 24 hours after he was sworn into the portfolios of police and crime prevention. He came immediately, he met some of the impacted traders and he listened to them speak from the heart, openly and honestly about their experiences and concerns with respect to community safety. We all have a role in ensuring that something like this never happens again and that our community can feel safe and is safe. Over the past few years I have worked very closely with the Sunshine community and with council to improve community safety, such as through additional CCTV footage and upgrades which we will shortly see through the Sunshine precinct master plan, including more lighting at the library forecourt.

There is of course so much more to do in this space to make Sunshine a CBD that is a wonderful place to come and visit and have a bowl of pho or check out one of the best and freshest banh mis but also, most importantly, a safe place for our community and traders. I know that traders have spoken to me about embracing CPTED, a strange way to explain crime prevention through environmental design. It is the idea that community infrastructure like seating, lighting and other street-based designs play a real role in creating an environment that is safer and more secure not just for traders but also for the broader community. Many of these businesses have spoken to me, for instance, about their concerns that seating along Hampshire Road has encouraged antisocial behaviour outside the front of their businesses. My local traders, you know who you are. Previously I have spoken to and I have written to Brimbank City Council on their behalf, and I have raised this concern and asked that that seating be removed. I again take the opportunity to urge Brimbank City Council to remove the seating on behalf of the Vietnamese local traders in the main street of Sunshine. I am hopeful that by working together with everyone, including Victoria Police, assertive outreach officers, our local businesses and Brimbank City Council, we can drastically improve community safety in our wonderful Sunshine.

Flood mitigation

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (19:22): (1767) My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide a comprehensive implementation report on the 73 recommendations in the 2022 flood inquiry. It needs to include the current status, responsible agency and completion timeframe for every recommendation still outstanding. This week parts of my region have again been under flood watch, a grim reminder of the October 2022 floods that devastated parts of Seymour, Nagambie, Murchison, Euroa and Benalla. 2022 is not history for our community. We remember the rising water, the evacuations and the long task of rebuilding. Adam and Alex Griffiths run Griff-Fit in Seymour, and their business was flooded in 2022. Nearly four years later they are still fighting Hollard insurance to have their claim resolved. Water was in the building by 5 pm but the region was not officially under flood until 9 pm that night, and that timing is the difference between stormwater, which their policy covers, and floodwater, which it does not. Five neighbouring businesses had claims rejected on the same basis. All five were overturned once an independent hydrologist proved stormwater arrived first. Hollard is the only insurer still refusing to accept that evidence. Adam told me today:

> I've still got PTSD. Every time you hear about floods, you get nervous about your livelihood, and we wouldn't survive if we were flooded again.

He kept his staff employed by taking outside work, and when he turned to Hollard Insurance, he was told, 'You're on your own. Good luck.' I want to acknowledge my friend TR Keller, who has given hundreds of hours pro bono helping businesses like the Griffiths fight insurers and who has continued that work supporting bushfire-affected communities since. Selfless, sustained community services like

this are exactly what carry our region through disaster after disaster, often doing the job government processes are too slow to do. Adam and Alex are expecting a baby boy in the coming four weeks. I wish you all the best for the next adventure.

There is another question here, though. What has been done since 2022 to make sure businesses like Griff-Fit are not put in the same position again? Labor responded to the 73 flood inquiry recommendations in February last year. Only 16 were supported in full. The rest were partial, in principle or under review. That is not the same as delivering them. We had the bushfire inquiry tabled just weeks ago, with 80 recommendations of its own risking the same fate. Adam and Alex should not fear every time it rains. Today a council CEO said to me that it feels like we have not learned anything from these devastating disasters. Isn't the definition of 'insanity' doing the same thing and expecting a different outcome? Our communities know another disaster is coming, but the Labor government keeps ignoring the recommendations that make us resilient. Minister, I ask you to visit my electorate, see firsthand the ongoing impact of the 2022 floods and now this year's bushfire and the absolutely dysfunctional response to recovery. These communities have been heard in these inquiries. It is time that Labor starts listening to regional Victoria.

Clarinda electorate health services

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (19:25): (1768) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide the latest update on the public health supports available to families in Clayton South. I was out doorknocking in Clayton South over the weekend and speaking to families about their priorities and about what matters to them and what they want to see from the Carroll Labor government. There were so many young families, many of whom had children at Westall Primary School. Westall Primary School is an amazing local school, which I have been so glad to see grow and prosper. Through our investment into a regeneration project supporting the upgrade and modernisation of Westall Primary School, we have created a hub link that connects the primary school with Westall Kindergarten. This is something that I am very proud of and our community is very proud of. It is an amazing community hub which sees the delivery of education, allied health and wellbeing services for our local community.

Out doorknocking, public health came through as a strong focus for families, as well as the cost of living and community safety. I would love to hear from the minister about how the Carroll Labor government is making access to public health care easier and fairer for my constituents. One particular initiative locally is Smile Squad. This is a fantastic initiative and another way that the Carroll Labor government is saving families time and money through free dental care for kids. This is a really important initiative for my community, a community where the cost of living is always front of mind. This is putting money back into the pockets of families in the Clarinda district and easing the cost-of-living pressure. We all know that regular dental check-ups can cost parents up to $400 a year per child, but with Labor's Smile Squad, it is free. Importantly, at-school services also mean busy families do not need to worry about missing work or school for the dental appointment. I commend the minister on this program and on her work making access to public health care easier and fairer for families in the Clarinda district, and I look forward to her response.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Malvern asked to amend electoral laws. I note that Speakers Delzoppo, Plowman and Fyffe have stated:

> A member cannot ask for legislation during the adjournment.

Would you like to rephrase in regard to policy?

Michael O'Brien: I apologise for misspeaking. Of course I meant to ask that the Premier raise with the electoral commission the design of the ballot papers for the forthcoming election.

Responses

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Housing, Building and Precincts, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Seniors) (19:28): A number of matters were raised by members this evening. They will be dutifully referred to relevant ministers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7:28 pm.