



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 20 June 2024

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

Juliana Addison, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Paul Edbrooke,
Wayne Farnham, Paul Hamer, Lauren Kathage, Nathan Lambert, Alison Marchant,
Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Kim O’Keeffe, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor and Iwan Walters

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Jacinta Allan

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

John Pesutto

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

David Southwick

Leader of the Nationals

Peter Walsh

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ¹	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	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	Werribee	ALP
Cleeland, Annabelle	Euroa	Nat	Pearson, Danny	Essendon	ALP
Connolly, Sarah	Laverton	ALP	Pesutto, John	Hawthorn	Lib
Couzens, Christine	Geelong	ALP	Read, Tim	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 ⁵	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Famham, 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	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	Prahran	Greens	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 ⁶	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ Resigned 27 September 2023

² ALP until 29 April 2024

³ Sworn in 6 February 2024

⁴ ALP until 5 August 2023

⁵ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁶ Sworn in 3 October 2023

Party abbreviations

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

CONTENTS

DOCUMENTS

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	2399
The Victorian Government Response to the Community Visitors Annual Report 2022–23	2399
Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission	2399
IBAC Operation Daintree Special Report: Government Progress Report.....	2399
Ombudsman	2399
Response to the Victorian Ombudsman’s Report: Alleged Politicisation of the Public Sector –	
Investigation of a Matter Referred from the Legislative Council on 9 February 2022, Part 2	2399
Development Victoria	2399
Nyaal Banyul: Geelong Convention and Event Centre Project	2399
Department of Premier and Cabinet	2399
Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2023.....	2399
Documents	2399

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment	2400
-------------------	------

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

North East Link.....	2400
Reynolds–Smiths roads, Templestowe	2400
West Gate Neighbourhood Fund	2400
Dale Ford.....	2401
Stawell Secondary College.....	2401
Mickleham small business.....	2401
Croydon electorate schools.....	2402
La Trobe University	2402
Bayspeak	2402
Pantry cafe, Brighton.....	2403
Brighton electorate crime.....	2403
Country Fire Authority Leopold brigade	2403
Connections Media.....	2403
Kokoda Track	2403
Sustainability Victoria.....	2404
Eid al-Adha	2404
Penola Catholic College.....	2404
Holy Spirit Church of the Syriac Catholic Community.....	2404
Lord’s Prayer.....	2404
Crime prevention	2405
Epping North Scout hall.....	2405
Firass Abiad	2405
Housing affordability	2405
Ripon electorate volunteers	2405
Djilang Plaza, Kardinia Park	2406
Barwon Early Parenting Centre	2406
Kids as Catalysts.....	2406
Holy Spirit Church of the Syriac Catholic Community.....	2407
Eid al-Adha	2407
Deafblind Awareness Week	2407
Narre Warren Football Netball Club	2407
Hallam Football Netball Club	2407
St Mina and St Marina Coptic Orthodox Church.....	2407
Eastern Community Legal Centre	2408
State Emergency Service Whittlesea unit	2408
Country Fire Authority Caroline Springs brigade	2408

BILLS

Subordinate Legislation and Administrative Arrangements Amendment Bill 2024.....	2409
Statement of compatibility.....	2409
Second reading.....	2411
Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024	2412
Second reading.....	2412

MOTIONS

Nuclear energy	2436
----------------------	------

MEMBERS

Minister for Employment	2443
Absence	2443

CONTENTS

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Community safety	2443
Ministers statements: health infrastructure.....	2445
Community safety	2445
Ministers statements: literacy education	2447
Health funding	2447
Ministers statements: renewable energy.....	2449
Privatisation policy	2449
Ministers statements: level crossing removals.....	2451
Metro Tunnel	2451
Ministers statements: education	2453

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Brighton electorate	2453
Pascoe Vale electorate.....	2454
Ovens Valley electorate	2454
Bass electorate	2454
Evelyn electorate	2454
Bayswater electorate	2455
Brunswick electorate.....	2455
Kororoit electorate.....	2455
Mornington electorate	2455
Bellarine electorate.....	2456

RULINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Constituency questions	2456
------------------------------	------

MOTIONS

Nuclear energy	2456
----------------------	------

BILLS

Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Repeal and Advisory Councils Bill 2024	2469
Council's amendments.....	2469

MOTIONS

Nuclear energy	2471
----------------------	------

BILLS

Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Bill 2024.....	2479
Second reading.....	2479
Third reading.....	2479
Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024	2479
Second reading.....	2479
Third reading.....	2480

RULINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Parliamentary precinct security	2480
Acting Speakers	2480

ADJOURNMENT

Youth crime.....	2480
Mac.Robertson Girls' High School	2481
Mooroolbark–Hull roads, Mooroolbark.....	2481
Syndal South Primary School	2482
Community safety	2482
Community safety	2483
Great South West Walk	2484
Merri-bek City Council.....	2484
Yarra Boulevard	2485
Northcote electorate train lines.....	2486
Responses	2487

Thursday 20 June 2024

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

Documents

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

The Victorian Government Response to the Community Visitors Annual Report 2022–23

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (09:35): I table, by leave, the government response to the community visitors report 2022–23.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission

IBAC Operation Daintree Special Report: Government Progress Report

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts, Minister for Creative Industries) (09:35): I table, by leave, the government progress report on recommendations made by IBAC's *Operation Daintree Special Report*.

Ombudsman

Response to the Victorian Ombudsman's Report: Alleged Politicisation of the Public Sector – Investigation of a Matter Referred from the Legislative Council on 9 February 2022, Part 2

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts, Minister for Creative Industries) (09:35): I table, by leave, the government response to the Ombudsman's report *Alleged Politicisation of the Public Sector: Investigation of a Matter Referred from the Legislative Council on 9 February 2022 – Part 2*.

Development Victoria

Nyaal Banyul: Geelong Convention and Event Centre Project

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts, Minister for Creative Industries) (09:36): I table, by leave, the *Nyaal Banyul: Geelong Convention and Event Centre Project* project summary.

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2023

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Jobs and Industry, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Women) (09:36): I table, by leave, the *Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2023*, domain 1 to 6 data tables and 2023 Closing the Gap tables.

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Auditor-General:

Annual Plan 2024–25

Assuring the Integrity of the Victorian Government's Procurement Activities – Ordered to be published

Effectiveness of Arterial Road Congestion Initiatives – Ordered to be published

Metro Tunnel Project: Phase 3 – Systems Integration, Testing and Commissioning – Ordered to be published

Education and Care Services Ombudsman, National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information Commissioner, and National Education and Care Services Privacy Commissioner – Report 2022–23

Land Tax Act 2005 – Report 2022–23 of Land Tax Absentee Owner Surcharge Exemptions under s 3BB

Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 – Victorian Government Report on Multicultural Affairs 2022–23

Phillip Island Nature Parks – Report 2022–23

Road Safety Act 1986 – Documents in relation to the Order in Council Declaring Certain Motor Vehicles Not to Be Motor Vehicles – Electric Scooters

State Owned Enterprises Act 1992:

Constitution of SEC Energy Pty Ltd under s 75

Constitution of SEC Infrastructure Pty Ltd under s 75

Constitution of SEC Victoria Pty Ltd under s 75.

Business of the house

Adjournment

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (09:38): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 30 July 2024.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

North East Link

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (09:39): I wish to raise two matters this morning. The first one is in relation to the North East Link. I have been contacted again by a number of traders and residents who are having difficulty with the North East Link Authority in having that authority accept they are responsible for a large amount of dust in people's homes or in peoples air-conditioning units in their businesses. This is like the Germans trying to deny they were responsible for the Battle of Britain. I mean, it is quite obvious that the dust is coming up from this project. I accept any new project like this is going to create that kind of disturbance, but the North East Link needs to take responsibility for their actions and support those businesses and those residents who are being adversely affected during construction. People understand that a project is going to have side effects when it is being built, but the North East Link Authority needs to actually take responsibility for their actions and support those residents and those businesses.

Reynolds–Smiths roads, Templestowe

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (09:39): Secondly, I wish to put on record my concern at the lack of interest of the government in fixing the Reynolds Road–Smiths Road intersection in Templestowe. It must be signalised. The government boasted about supporting a council project to upgrade Pettys Reserve, which is on the corner of that intersection, so we now have a large volume of traffic which comes out of that intersection, particularly on Saturdays. Like many parts of Templestowe, it is hilly, and there is a crest when you are atop the rise when you are driving particularly westbound on Reynolds Road. That intersection needs to be signalised, even if partially, because it is dangerous, and there is no action from the government.

West Gate Neighbourhood Fund

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (09:40): Nearly a million dollars was recently allocated to organisations in my electorate in the latest round of the West Gate Neighbourhood Fund grants. These grants will benefit over 45 different community organisations throughout my electorate.

A decommissioned tram will be transformed into a wellbeing space at St Mary's Primary School in Altona. It will be a peaceful place for students and provide a space for learning outside the classroom. The South Kingsville Community Centre received \$15,000 to hold a block party to commemorate the centre's 30th anniversary and bring people together for a day of activities, music and celebration. Thanks also to this funding, over the weekend the Willy Lit Fest was able to expand its children's program for younger children from all over the west to come and explore the joys of reading.

Upgrades of the facilities at Spotty cricket club will enhance community connectedness and participation and see members of my community stay active and healthy. The Melbourne Open Water Swimming Club, based at Willy beach, received \$3445 to upgrade safety equipment. Newport RSL received \$130,000 to install a commercial kitchen to provide meals for members, veterans and families of Newport RSL and the local community. And finally, the home of the Newport Panthers at AW Langshaw Reserve will have its lighting upgraded to allow for evening training sessions and games. This will make an enormous difference to my community, and I congratulate everyone involved.

Dale Ford

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:41): I would like to acknowledge the recent passing of Dr Dale Ford of Hamilton. Dale was a respected doctor who served the Hamilton community for over four decades. He was a friend of mine and a colleague when I worked at Western District Health Service, but he was also a fabulous support when I was at Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital, a hospital that no longer exists, in order to look up training programs to support doctors and to attract doctors to the area. Dr Ford will certainly be remembered as a dedicated GP and rural generalist and an advocate for better healthcare outcomes, for better health care in the Hamilton community and also of course for better health training opportunities. I pass on my condolences to his wife Rowena, their three children Tanya, Adam and Edwina, his colleagues and his friends. Vale, Dale Ford.

Stawell Secondary College

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:42): I raised a matter for the Minister for Education, and that was my concern that Labor cannot manage projects and that Stawell students are going to pay the price. The previous government promised Stawell Secondary College \$4 million, and they were promised a range of improvements to their school. However, they are now being told that will not be possible and that they will have to look at rescoping the project. I do wonder why when it comes to metropolitan projects we see more money being tipped in, with cost blowouts, but when it comes to Stawell Secondary College the government cannot find that additional money to make sure that our local students are given the best possible learning opportunities but also that Labor delivers on its promises.

Mickleham small business

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (09:43): Earlier this month I had the opportunity to visit two fantastic local businesses in Mickleham which have been doing a great job in their very first year. Late last year I visited Evaryde ice cream for the first time. It was great to check in and see how everything was tracking. Anil, Neelama, Jidin and Saumya are rightly proud of their business, with all the ice cream and frozen treats made fresh in-house and heaps of delicious flavours to choose from. They are doing an outstanding job, being the first store of their kind in Mickleham, and I look forward to watching them grow.

I also had the chance to pop into Genesis Health and Fitness to meet with co-owner Michael and see some of the fantastic facilities they have on offer for locals. Michael gave me a tour of the gym, where it was clear just how busy and in demand their services are, and I also got a chance to see the next stage of works, which includes a dedicated gym area for women, which will no doubt be very popular.

Later that day I hosted a small business round table with the Minister for Small Business, where we had the opportunity to hear from local businesses about some of their experiences as well as talk about some of the supports and grants that are available to them through Business Victoria. Following that

meeting those business owners have already set up a traders association, and I wish them all the best. Thank you to both Anil at Evaryde ice cream and Michael at Genesis Health and Fitness for inviting me to visit them, along with Avtar and all the small business owners who attended the round table. I am looking forward to working with all of you.

Croydon electorate schools

David HODGETT (Croydon) (09:44): I rise today in recognition of Alastair Lowrie, a work experience student who has been working in my office. He has been present in the Parliament for two days this week, and he informed me this experience has been extremely rewarding and informative on his journey into the world of politics. He is very grateful for this opportunity.

I was pleased to speak this week with enthusiastic students at Pembroke Primary School about the subject of leadership and what traits a successful leader has. They were very attentive and well behaved while also asking very in-depth and important questions on the subject. I was also present at their assembly, where I had the pleasure of listening to the passionate and uniting Pembroke song. There I had the honour of bestowing many awards on students for their hard work and commitment to learning. Pembroke Primary School is an incredible school community of motivated students, guided by the acting principal Chris Kent.

My staff and I also enjoy the rewarding experience of volunteering at Croydon Primary School at their breakfast club on Tuesday mornings. Volunteers, teachers, parents and members of the Croydon Mooroolbark Lions Club band together to provide food for students who may have missed out on breakfast or whose families may be struggling with cost-of-living pressures. The students are always appreciative and enjoy their meal, while their parents are filled with relief and gratitude. This week 39 students ate toast, cereal and fruit for breakfast before they headed off to class, thanks to the tremendous efforts of these volunteers.

I thank you, Alastair, for all your efforts this week. Best wishes for your future study and for your future career path.

La Trobe University

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts, Minister for Creative Industries) (09:46): I rise today to pay tribute to the work of La Trobe University, which of course has a campus in Bundoora but also many campuses across regional Victoria. The partnerships between government and La Trobe have delivered great outcomes not only for my electorate but for the wider community too. Just last December the Allan government, La Trobe University and biotechnology company BioNTech announced that Bundoora will be home to BioNTech's new Melbourne manufacturing hub. The facility will soon be producing life-saving medicines, vaccines and treatments for serious diseases, including cancer. Make no mistake, this partnership at La Trobe will not only be saving lives but also, importantly, creating 1200 jobs over 10 years.

During the COVID pandemic the Victorian government was partnering with La Trobe, even while the federal Liberals and Nationals treated universities as a second-class sector by refusing to provide JobSeeker to that sector. It is simple: Labor values tertiary education and the Liberals and Nationals do not. We have invested at La Trobe: some \$101 million in the La Trobe University sports park, including the home of the Matildas, which opened last year; and \$17 million towards the new digital and bio innovation hubs in 2021. The Allan Labor government is invested in La Trobe University and continues to back its important work, particularly because we understand its importance to Melbourne's north and to regional Victoria.

Bayspeak

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:47): This week the finalists of the Bayspeak competition held their finals in Parliament House. Bayspeak is a Rotary-led youth public speaking competition for

bayside secondary school students. Speakers chose issues like mental health, the importance of connecting with our heritage and where all our missing socks go. Congratulations to junior winner Sarah Abadee, senior winner Sanuli Mudannayake and runner-up Carey Tong.

Pantry cafe, Brighton

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:47): The Pantry cafe has been at the heart of Church Street for 30 years. This week the Pantry team, hundreds of people who have been given their first job over the years and the broader Brighton community celebrated the 30th milestone. The owners do not like being the focus, but they deserve it. From the people of Brighton, thank you to Dan Vaughan and Guy Mainwaring.

Brighton electorate crime

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:48): On Saturday afternoon four southern local grocers, including Dockendorff's in Cochrane Street, Brighton, were violently robbed. The criminals attacked violently and monstereed young workers. Only one of the suspected four offenders has been arrested. Lincoln Wymer, chief operating officer of the Reddrop Group said:

The violence and terror our staff were subjected to on Saturday highlights our industries concerns with youth crime in Victoria. These youth are targeting young staff, and mum & dad operators, who are seen to be easy targets.

... We are just trying to do our jobs and service our communities.

We strongly advocate for state government reforms to bail laws ...

Bayside is scared. And we are also angry because we know that Jacinta Allan is ignoring these crimes and refusing to toughen the law.

The SPEAKER: Order! Please refer to members by their correct titles.

Country Fire Authority Leopold brigade

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (09:49): Last month I joined members of the Leopold fire brigade to officially hand over the keys to a new tanker and to thank volunteers for their service to the local community. The new medium tanker has joined the Leopold fire brigade fleet thanks to funding through the Victorian government's volunteer emergency services equipment program. The fire brigade has a long history in Leopold and is now home to 53 members, including 30 operational members, who respond to around 154 incidents each year, including rescues, motor vehicle accidents and scrub, grass and house fires. We are really grateful to have such a professional and dedicated brigade, with members giving up their time to keep our communities safe. I know that this new tanker will also be vital in keeping the brigade members safe. Thank you never seems enough, but on behalf of the Bellarine community we thank the Leopold fire brigade under the guidance of captain Chris Wilkinson.

Connections Media

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (09:50): Last week I was interviewed by Ryan and Shannon at Connections Media's studio at GenU. GenU is a disability support organisation, a fantastic hub, which has a dedicated media studio where Ryan and Shannon interview people. They do this to share their Geelong stories and connect their community, and they have told me they have become more confident in talking to people as they are doing this role. They asked some great questions about me and my job and the Bellarine and were terrific interviewers. I would love to encourage people to look up Connections on Facebook and give Ryan and Shannon a like and a follow to see the tremendous work that they are doing.

Kokoda Track

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (09:50): In 12 days time I will be embarking on a journey on the Kokoda Trail with 25 students from around the Victorian community. They are year 11 students that

have won scholarships, and they will be learning about the sacrifices made by the 39th Battalion and the 2/14th Battalion, both raised from Victoria, that were at the forefront of that battle. It is a really unique experience for those kids. They are all allocated a soldier. They get to walk in their footsteps. They get to visit the places where they died and understand how they died, and then at the end of that journey we take them to the Bomana War Cemetery, where they make a commitment to that soldier as to what they are going to do with the rest of their lives. It is very powerful for those kids. I want to thank all the sponsors from around the state who have donated money to educate a new generation of our youth on the sacrifices made not only on the Kokoda Trail but in all theatres of battle.

We have a number of MPs going this year. I am hoping next year we can have cross-chamber support. I know there are a few on the other side who have indicated an interest in coming – the member for Frankston only yesterday. I am trying to convince the member for Gippsland South to attend, but I am not having a lot of luck. I am not sure he would make it. You need a level of intestinal fortitude to get across the trail, but I am hoping that I can talk him into going. The honourable member Mr Wells has done it. He did the short version, but he has done it. Come on board, and let us give these kids a great experience.

Sustainability Victoria

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (09:52): It has been another busy fortnight in the electorate, and I would like to thank Hume City Council for hosting Sustainability Victoria's Buy Recycled northern showcase and all the local businesses who are turning our waste into valuable products, including the marvellous social enterprise Enable, who refurbish computers and distribute them to people in need. Hume are fabulous at supporting economic development, the circular economy and good-quality jobs for local people.

Eid al-Adha

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (09:52): I would like to wish my Muslim community Eid Mubarak for Eid al-Adha. I am looking forward to joining many local events this weekend recognising the values of sacrifice and charity to others.

Penola Catholic College

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (09:52): It was an enormous pleasure to open the magnificent new learning space at Penola Catholic College on Monday, named after Annie Brice, determined Boandik woman, defender of rights and friend of St Mary McKillop. It was really special to have members of her family present, including Aunty Michelle Jacquelin-Furr, who did a beautiful acknowledgement of country in traditional language, and Bishop Terry Curtin and Father Dishan, who blessed the building.

Holy Spirit Church of the Syriac Catholic Community

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (09:53): I also had the pleasure of visiting the incredible new Holy Spirit Syriac Catholic church in Campbellfield with the member for Greenvale, and I thank so many community members who have contributed their time, talents and resources towards the building of this beautiful church.

Lord's Prayer

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (09:53): With 47 places of worship in the electorate, faith is an important part of life for many people in my community, and I thank the Most Reverend Peter Comensoli, the Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier, Sheikh Muhammad Nawas Saleem, Shri Makarand Bhagwat and Rabbi Ralph Genende OAM for taking the time to write to me about the importance of the prayer that is said each sitting day in this place along with – *(Time expired)*

Crime prevention

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (09:53): I rise to speak on the growing crime issues not just in the state of Victoria but also in my electorate of Rowville. As we all saw from the most recent crime stats released by the Crime Statistics Agency today, crime is on the rise. Over the last year crime has risen in Victoria by over 10 per cent, and in my community of Knox crime is up over 8 per cent. And what is the Labor government's response to this – cutting community crime prevention funding. This is funding that is directly aimed at crime prevention. The community and residents in my electorate have been calling on this government to increase funding, not cut it by half. What Labor will not cut to fund their unwanted and cost-blown-out projects is astounding. Labor have sacrificed the airport rail and upgrades to major hospitals, and now we are seeing them sacrificing our community safety for a Suburban Rail Loop which goes from nowhere to nowhere. Labor needs to seriously reconsider what their priorities are. My priority would be to keep our community safe, not cut crime prevention funding by 46 per cent.

Epping North Scout hall

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (09:55): I was very excited to open on Sunday on behalf of the Minister for Youth the brand new Epping North Scout hall. The opening celebration was together with the Scout members; Laura, one of the Scout leaders; and of course long-time friends and activists in the area Cara Horner and Thomas Di Palma. The Allan Labor government provided \$600,000 plus the land at Edgars Creek secondary school to build this important piece of infrastructure. While buildings are important, it is the people and the work that is done in and outside the building that really counts. The building just makes it easier and demonstrates the government's commitment to residents in the outer suburbs of Epping North and Wollert. I will just give a big shout-out to the fantastic work they do with young people in the area, in a growing suburb that really does not have a lot for young people to do at all different stages of their youth.

Firass Abiad

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (09:56): I would also like to say it was a great pleasure to host a parliamentary lunch for Dr Firass Abiad, the minister for health in Lebanon, together with my parliamentary colleagues the members for Broadmeadows and Greenvale. Dr Abiad was on a tour to Australia arranged by Dr Walid Ahmar, a very well known and well respected cardiologist and also founding member of the Australian Lebanese Medical Association.

Housing affordability

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (09:56): You might think from the way some real estate agents and landlords are carrying on right now that they are bleeding money to keep their tenants happy. There is this warning of a landlord exodus should the renter class be granted something that resembles a secure, affordable, non-mouldy roof over their heads, as though, when a property investor sells up, that property just ceases to exist. So you would imagine if that were the case, if landlords were really under so much stress, that it would be reflected in the data. Well, new data released from the ATO shows that landlords nearly doubled their earnings in a year. Australian landlords made \$6 billion in 2022, up from \$3.2 billion the previous year. In the middle of the worst housing crisis in living memory, more landlords are turning a profit, which, think about it, means renters are covering not only any mortgage repayments but also real estate agent fees and the maintenance and repair costs. They are also forking out extra cash on top of that for their landlord's pocket money while renters are struggling to keep their head above water, let alone afford to save for a deposit of their own. When Labor fails to cap and freeze rents, this is who and what they are protecting.

Ripon electorate volunteers

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (09:58): Volunteers are the heart and soul of Ripon. Every single day they do so much for our region, and we are so grateful to all of them. I want to give a big shout-out to some special volunteers I have met over the last two weeks. To controller Dylan West and his team at

the Ararat SES unit, thank you for always going above and beyond. To captain Rob Haughie and the 52 brigade members of the Kingston fire brigade, I look forward to helping you get the station upgrade you deserve. Thank you to Jenni Sewell and Chrissy Austin from the Creswick Neighbourhood Centre, who are creating delicious free community lunches for residents in need, and Alex, Gavan and Alan Holt, Jon Chandler and Michelle and Bruce Hargreaves, who helped make the over \$6 million new Donaldson Park complex happen in Wedderburn. That is a game changer for the local footy, netball, hockey and harness racing clubs. A big congratulations also to Dianne Radford and the Blue Ribbon Foundation's Ararat branch volunteers, who raised tens of thousands of dollars for the Ararat hospital at their annual gala night, and to Adam Liversage, Ben Carey, Bobby Norris and the Woady Yaloak Football Netball Club committee, who raised over \$10,000 at last Saturday night's fun-filled bogan bingo. It is legends like these who have put their hands up to help others, and we would be lost without them.

Djilang Plaza, Kardinia Park

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (09:59): Kardinia Park has been transforming over recent years to reflect the Wadawurrung First Peoples' history. As part of that journey, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events recently joined me to officially open the new Djilang Plaza. The highlight of the Djilang Plaza are the Ngarrwa Kalk – knowledge sticks – which feature stunning Wadawurrung artworks designed by Wadawurrung woman Corrina Eccles. The knowledge sticks are illuminated in multicoloured lighting at night and help detail the many layers of Wadawurrung country and all that belongs to its people. It has been fantastic to see so many people standing around admiring the work and taking photos. It really is stunning. It is a real privilege to have Corrina's artwork in such a prominent place. Completion of Djilang Plaza, delivered as part of the fifth stage of the Kardinia Park redevelopment, is another key milestone for the project. The \$142 million project has helped transform Kardinia Park stadium into Australia's best regional sports and entertainment venue.

Barwon Early Parenting Centre

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (10:00): Also, I recently attended the official opening of the new Barwon Early Parenting Centre. As the chair of the community advisory committee for the early parenting centre I want to acknowledge and thank the committee members for their work during the consultation on the design and function of the centre – Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative, G21, primary care, Bellarine Community Health, the City of Greater Geelong, Barwon Health and many more. Designed to feel like a home away from home, the centre will support families – *(Time expired)*

Kids as Catalysts

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (10:00): Who is leading positive change in our local and wide world? The kids at Newhaven and Bass Valley primary schools. They ooze community spirit, empowered to take the lead, making a difference in an area that resonates. Kids as Catalysts is the program's name – an absolute joy to voice this onto the public record.

I present Newhaven's Archer, Jaxon and Jobe, who volunteered in all things wildlife at Moonar'mia; Lily, Layla and Ayla, whose project raised awareness for roadkill on Millowl – the posters are a sample of creative genius too; and Reuben, Shakirra and Louis, who stationed themselves at Free 3D Hands, making an arm for Xavier.

Over to Bass Valley, the Cardio Kids – Jackson, Bailey, Casey, Chase and Cain – teamed up with Bass Coast Health, creating a get-moving challenge which was physical and fun. The Diversity Dudes – Mia, Indy, Paddy, Sebastian and Lucy – held a book swap, raising funds for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation. Bird is the Word's Lacey, Taylah, Rhys, Cooper, Logan and Matilda hung out with Totally Renewable Tenby – 80 plants planted to give safe vegetation for endangered birds. The Waste Wrestlers – Autumn, Dom, Mila, Genevieve, Levi and Amber – chose Sustainability Victoria and held a clothing swap to reduce the amount of waste going into landfill. Power to the People's Lexi, Jocelyn, Addison, Ella, Sophie and Lola had elders as their interest, so they promoted the Corinella &

District Community Centre as a place to go during outages, making a video and posters and collecting donations too.

A massive cheer in all community activism magnificence to the students, schools, teachers, Kids Thrive, community groups – *(Time expired)*

Holy Spirit Church of the Syriac Catholic Community

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (10:02): Thank you, Monsignor Fadhel Yaqeen Yakob Alqass Ashaq, for welcoming me and the member for Broadmeadows back to the beautiful new Holy Spirit Church in Campbellfield this week. So much progress has been made building this stunning home for the Syriac Catholic Church in Melbourne since my last visit, and I am delighted that the occupancy permit was issued just this week, bringing that opening so much closer to reality.

It has been inspirational seeing the impact of the work that community members have made, from suppliers to tradies, who have donated so much time, money and energy to building this church. It really is of the community and in the community, and the Syriac community that has arrived in Australia over the last 10 years will have a home – the first Syriac church not just in Melbourne but in Australia. This is a momentous occasion, and I cannot wait to be back for the formal opening and blessing very, very soon.

Eid al-Adha

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (10:03): Families in Greenvale and around the world have been celebrating Eid al-Adha this week. This three-day celebration is marked with special prayers, feasts and the sharing of food with family, friends, neighbours and the poor and needy. Eid al-Adha is one of the most important Islamic holidays, commemorating the willingness of Prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Ishmael as an act of obedience to God's command. Eid Mubarak to all in my community who have been celebrating this week and indeed around the world.

Deafblind Awareness Week

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (10:03): Deafblind Awareness Week is next week, 24 to 30 June. Thank you to all the organisations who gathered on the steps of Parliament – Able Australia, CHARGE Syndrome Australasia and Vision Australia – to mark this week.

Narre Warren Football Netball Club

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:03): I recently attended the clash of the suburbs footy match between Berwick Springs footy club and Narre Warren footy club. I did mention this last week, and I did also ask the member for Berwick to take a small wager with me on the game. However, he was not very confident in his team and had very good reason not to be because Narre Warren won by over a hundred points. This week's game is first versus second, which I am really looking forward to at home in Narre Warren.

Hallam Football Netball Club

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:04): I also attended the Hallam footy club game for Dane Swan round. It was an exciting day with the legendary Dane Swan, who has just been inducted into the AFL Hall of Fame during the week. It was an exciting day. Dane Swan donned a guernsey for the Hallam Hawks, which was very good, giving them a very significant boost. I am very, very far from a Collingwood fan. However, it really was a great afternoon, and I want to make special thanks to president Jack, who is an absolute superstar, and his team for organising such a fun day and event.

St Mina and St Marina Coptic Orthodox Church

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:04): I also attended the St Mina and St Marina Coptic Orthodox Church Autumn community festival. They do these festivals twice a year. They are incredible. The food is amazing. It was really a great celebration of food and activities and a really

great service that I also attended with Julian Hill. A heartfelt thanks to Father Abanoub and his team for their warm hospitality and for creating such a welcoming and enriching experience for everyone who attended. These events make a great contribution to our community.

Eastern Community Legal Centre

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (10:05): It was wonderful to join the Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC), with the member for Albert Park, for its 50th birthday celebration recently and witness the profound impact that it has had on our community. This significant milestone highlights its continuous commitment to promoting social justice, upholding human rights and supporting community wellbeing.

The ECLC was founded in 1974 by a committed group of Nunawading residents and legal and community workers with the aim of addressing social inequalities and improving access to the legal system. Their vision was to assist residents in overcoming barriers to justice by supporting the progressive social justice movement at the time. Since then the centre has grown, changed and broadened into a comprehensive and dynamic interdisciplinary legal service that strives to advance fair results, prevent issues and promote the resilience and wellbeing of communities throughout Melbourne's east. The ongoing dedication of ECLC volunteers since 1974 is commendable, and their commitment to helping the community has made it possible for thousands of people across our community to navigate the legal system.

I also want to extend a special thanks to CEO Michael Smith for his exceptional leadership and dedication to ECLC's mission. I wish everyone at the ECLC all the best as they celebrate this milestone and continue to grow and succeed in everything they do. Their work remains invaluable to our community as true representatives of service and justice.

State Emergency Service Whittlesea unit

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (10:06): I am so pleased to relate to the chamber my recent visit with controller Gary Doorbar and the Whittlesea SES. What a fantastic group of people that are serving the community out of the goodness of their hearts, out of the cleverness of their brains and out of the strength of their hands. I thank them so much for their contribution to our community.

While I was there – it was a freezing cold night – they were outside training and learning. It occurred to me that these volunteers spend hundreds of hours training just to help us in the worst hour of our lives. All the hard work that they do is thinking ahead to something we do not know is even coming yet. I thank them for their dedication and the work they put into making sure that they can keep us and our properties safe through some of the hardest times.

I have to reflect on the fact that the volunteers that I saw there were a reflection of our community – all ages, all genders and all cultures. That tells me that this is an inclusive and welcoming place for people to have an outlet to serve their community. Again I say a very big thankyou to controller Gary Doorbar and the fantastic crew there. We absolutely back in the SES and all that they do, and we always will, because we know that they are the backbone of our community.

Country Fire Authority Caroline Springs brigade

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (10:08): On Sunday I had the absolute privilege of going to the Caroline Springs CFA. It was fantastic. What I did there was hand over the keys to a brand new heavy tanker. I have got to say the fire men and women were absolutely rapt to see this. They have 51 members at this brigade, and they were really proud about the heavy tanker. It is a state-of-the-art heavy tanker, and this is one of 48 brigades to receive a new heavy tanker thanks to the investment of more than \$22.7 million from this Allan Labor government. As we know, our emergency service crews are so important to us, and they do so much great work in our community. I know that every member in this chamber is so proud of the work which they do and the support that we can give them.

*Bills***Subordinate Legislation and Administrative Arrangements Amendment Bill 2024***Statement of compatibility*

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts, Minister for Creative Industries) (10:10): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Subordinate Legislation and Administrative Arrangements Amendment Bill 2024:

Opening paragraphs

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (the Charter), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Subordinate Legislation and Administrative Arrangements Amendment Bill 2024 (Bill).

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

Overview

The Bill makes minor and technical changes to improve the operation and clarity of the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* (SL Act) and the *Administrative Arrangements Act 1983* (AA Act).

The objective of the proposed Bill is to:

- clarify and improve the operation of the SL Act in its governance of the development of subordinate legislation by the Executive Government; and
- clarify and improve the operation of the AA Act by improving the usability of Orders in Council made under the AA Act and providing greater certainty and clarity as to their effect.

The reforms proposed address issues identified by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and other government departments in the administration of the two Acts.

Specifically, the Bill will amend the SL Act to:

- add provisions to assist with the interpretation of key definitions in the SL Act, including clarifying the definitions of ‘legislative character’ and ‘administrative character’. The definitions are applied to determine whether the SL Act applies to subordinate instruments;
- expressly provide for departmental consultation in the development of statutory rules or legislative instruments, to reflect the departmental consultation process that occurs in practice. The SL Act currently only requires consultation with impacted Ministers whose area of responsibility may be affected by the proposed statutory rule or legislative instrument;
- extend the application of an exemption from regulatory impact statement processes so that it is available for statutory rules, as well as legislative instruments, where the instrument is responding to a public emergency, urgent public health or safety issue or damage to the environment, resource sustainability or the economy. The SL Act currently only provides for such exemptions for legislative instruments; and
- update the requirements for how statutory rules are made available to reduce the current administrative burden and reflect that the public is likely to seek to purchase or inspect a statutory rule online. The Bill allows a physical copy of a statutory rule to be purchased online or at an approved bookshop, and requires that the responsible Minister ensures that a copy of a statutory rule is available for inspection without charge. The Government Printer is currently required to ensure that copies of statutory rules can be purchased from a prescribed bookshop, with no obligation to publish them online.

The Bill will amend the AA Act to:

- enable a consolidated Administrative Arrangements Order (AAO) version to be made by the Secretary and published online. This reform will address departmental and agency feedback that it is complicated to search for information on administrative changes and arrangements, such as changes to Ministerial responsibility without a consolidated AAO; and
- clarify the definition and scope of key terms in the AA Act, to assist departments and agencies in interpreting the AA Act.

Human Rights Issues

The Bill engages the following rights under the Charter:

- right to freedom of expression (section 15); and

- right to take part in public life (section 18).

For the following reasons, having taken into account all relevant factors, I am satisfied that the Bill is compatible with the Charter and, if any rights are limited, the limitation is reasonable and justified in a free and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

Right to freedom of expression (section 15)

Section 15(1) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to hold an opinion without interference, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds orally, in writing, in print, by way or art or in another medium chosen by that person.

Clauses 3 and 28 of the Bill clarify key definition provisions of the SL Act and AA Act. The clarifications will make it easier for departments and agencies to understand their responsibilities, including, for example, being able to identify where subordinate legislation requires community consultation through a regulatory impact statement process. As a result, the Bill may enhance the right to freedom of expression by clarifying the circumstances in which community consultation should occur, thereby enabling people to more easily seek to enforce that right if consultation does not occur.

Accordingly, I consider that the Bill is consistent with the right to freedom of expression in section 15 of the Charter.

Right to take part in public life (section 18)

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

The right applies to a wide range of activities such as state and local politics and public administration. It might include a person being involved in politics or sharing their opinion in an election or referendum. Every eligible person has the right to vote in state and local council elections.

Clauses 3 and 28 of the Bill clarify key definition provisions of the SL Act and AA Act. These provisions make it easier for departments and agencies to understand their responsibilities, including for example being able to identify whether an instrument is a legislative instrument or, specifically, whether it is of a legislative or purely administrative character for the purposes of the SL Act. The incorrect characterisation of an instrument may lead to a lack of appropriate community scrutiny, especially as instruments characterised as administrative in character are not subject to a regulatory impact statement process. As such, the Bill may enhance the right to take part in public life by clarifying definitions and the circumstances in which community consultation should occur. This ensures the community can express their views about issues that affect them, and more easily seek to enforce that right if consultation does not occur.

Clause 9 provides for the exemption of statutory rules or legislative instruments from the application with all or any of the provisions of the SL Act, including from public consultation requirements. This has an impact on the right to take part in public life by limiting the public's ability to be consulted on the making of statutory rules and legislative instruments. However, this is justified because the new exemption grounds only apply in specific circumstances that help to maintain the status quo and allow the government to act quickly during periods of a declared emergency.

Clause 18 requires statutory rules to be available online. The Government Printer is currently required to ensure that copies of statutory rules can be purchased from a prescribed bookshop but there is no requirement that they be made available online. Clause 18 modernises the SL Act by requiring statutory rules to be made available online or at an approved bookshop. Given current technology, much of the public is likely to seek information online, so requiring statutory rules to also be available in this way rather than at specific physical locations will make statutory rules more accessible to a broader portion of the public. Improved access to statutory rules will enhance the right to take part in public life by ensuring that people are aware of their rights and obligations under those rules.

Similarly, clause 30 provides for the electronic publication of AAO consolidated versions to be published online. In addition to ensuring information on administrative changes and arrangements is easier for departments and agents to access, it will also ensure that members of the public can more easily access this information and be made aware of changes such as changes to Ministerial responsibility. Improved access to AAO consolidated versions will enhance the right to take part in public life by ensuring that people are more clearly aware of administrative changes and arrangements.

Accordingly, I consider that the Bill is consistent with the right to take part in public life in section 18 of the Charter.

Conclusion

The Bill promotes and protects Charter rights. To the extent that the Bill affects or limits Charter rights, I consider that these limitations are reasonable and demonstrably justifiable.

Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Health Infrastructure
Minister for Ambulance Services

Second reading

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts, Minister for Creative Industries) (10:10): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Subordinate Legislation and Administrative Arrangements Amendment Bill 2024 (Bill) aims to improve the operation and clarity of the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* (SL Act) and the *Administrative Arrangements Act 1983* (AA Act).

The reforms are all minor and technical in nature and address issues identified by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and other government departments in the administration of the SL Act and AA Act.

Key SL Act reforms*Clarification of definitions*

The Bill will add provisions to the SL Act to assist with the interpretation of ‘legislative character’ and ‘administrative character’, which are definitions that are applied to determine whether the SL Act applies to subordinate instruments. Departments and agencies have indicated that, at times, interpreting and applying these definitions presents challenges, so the Bill aims to make these definitions clearer.

Departmental consultation

The SL Act requires that the Minister must, in the preparation of statutory rules and legislative instruments and where the Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 Guidelines require consultation, ensure that consultation occurs with any other Minister whose area of responsibility may be affected by the proposed statutory rule or legislative instrument. The Bill will permit consultation to also occur with impacted public sector body Heads, to reflect the departmental consultation that occurs in practice. The Bill provides that a failure to undertake this consultation will not affect the operation of the statutory rule or legislative instrument.

Public emergency exemption

Currently, legislative instruments can be exempt from regulatory impact statement processes where the instrument is responding to a public emergency, urgent public health or safety issue or damage to the environment, resource sustainability or the economy. The Bill will extend this emergency exemption ground to apply to statutory rules that have not already been extended under section 9 of the SL Act.

Online access to statutory rules

The Government Printer is currently required to ensure that copies of statutory rules can be purchased from a prescribed bookshop. This means that statutory rules are, at present, not required to be made available for purchase online. To modernise the SL Act, the Bill will require that the Government Printer makes every effort to ensure a physical copy of a statutory rule can be purchased online or an approved bookshop. The Minister can recommend to the Governor in Council that it declare by order published in the Government Gazette an approved bookshop. Ministers must also ensure that a copy of a statutory rule is available for inspection without charge.

Key AA Act reforms*Consolidated Administrative Arrangements Order*

The Bill will allow for a consolidated Administrative Arrangements Order (AAO) version to be made. This reform will address departmental and agency feedback that it is complicated to search for information on administrative changes and arrangements, such as changes to Ministerial responsibility. An AAO consolidated version published in accordance with the Bill will be admissible as evidence thereof before all

courts and, unless the contrary is proved, a document purporting to be an AAO consolidated version will be what it purports to be.

Other amendments to the AA Act

Further amendments are proposed to clarify the definition and scope of key terms in the AA Act, to assist departments and agencies in interpreting the AA Act.

Conclusion

These minor and technical changes will improve the operation and clarity of the SL Act and the AA Act.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (10:10): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Thursday 4 July.

Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (10:11): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024. This is another justice omnibus bill where a whole lot of different matters get sewn together in a legislative quilt to try and deal with a number of different issues. In terms of this bill, it deals with crime statistics, the use of electronic signatures in criminal proceedings, allowing the ongoing use of digitally recorded evidence-in-chief in family violence proceedings, changes to defamation in relation to reporting offences, changes to defamation in relation to defences available to digital intermediaries, amending the power of the Public Interest Monitor under two statutes and a large variety of amendments to integrity agencies operating in Victoria. I will try to make the best use of my allotted 30 minutes to go through the key features of each of these changes.

In terms of the changes to crime statistics, the bill provides the chief statistician of crime statistics in this state with greater access to certain court data for statistical and for research purposes. I think it is actually quite important that the Crime Statistics Agency has got better access to better data so it can better paint a picture of the true state of crime in this state. Crime statistics released just this morning, as I understand, do paint a pretty bleak picture of the state of crime in the state of Victoria. This is an issue on which as Shadow Attorney-General I have had a lot to say, as have my colleague the Shadow Minister for Police, the member for Berwick, and the Leader of the Opposition. We are very concerned about crime.

In fact I attended a public meeting on community safety with the member for Sandringham, which he hosted in his electorate last week. Over 300 people packed out the Beaumaris Bowls Club; it was literally standing room only. It was quite an extraordinary turnout. We had the local acting inspector of police on the panel along with the president of the local Neighbourhood Watch, and people are genuinely concerned about their safety when they see their police stations closed at night, as has happened to mine in Malvern; Malvern police station on Glenferrie Road used to be open 24 hours a day for many, many decades until this year when under this Labor government the opening hours to the public were reduced to just 8 hours a day. Unfortunately, I do not think the aggravated burglars who come into Malvern work business hours. I do not think they are actually that careful with their timing. So we are very concerned that a lack of police resources has seen not just my police station in Malvern close 16 hours a day to the public but I think 43 stations across Victoria reduce opening hours this year. Cutting police station opening hours does nothing to keep Victorians safe. The government

can talk all it likes about putting resources into Victoria Police, but if you cannot fill the roles, if police command do not have the troops on the ground, that is why police stations are closing, and that is not keeping the community safe.

I do think it is important that the Crime Statistics Agency have better access to data. I will resist the temptation to go into the detail of how the Crime Statistics Agency came to be set up other than by saying that prior to the 2010 election we saw an outrageous abuse of crime statistics by the government of the day and indeed by the chief commissioner at the time in seeking to portray a false picture of the state of crime in Victoria just ahead of an election. That led to a complete collapse in public confidence in the use of crime statistics in this state, and I would say it led to a lack of confidence in Victoria Police command at the time. It was because of that that the newly elected Baillieu Liberal–Nationals government sought to establish a crime statistics agency – independent, with integrity – to report on the true state of crime in Victoria. I think it is important that we have additional access to data.

In terms of this bill, it will allow the chief statistician to seek applicable court data held in electronic form relating to applicable proceedings, and the chief statistician can seek that from the chief executives of the Magistrates' Court, the County Court, the Supreme Court and the Children's Court. Applicable proceedings include criminal proceedings, bail proceedings and family violence and personal safety intervention order proceedings as well as some other matters. There are some safeguards to try and make sure that information provided is de-identified. It is not appropriate that personal information be provided to the chief statistician, but I believe the bill provides safeguards to deal with that.

I do note that in my consultation on this bill I contacted many stakeholders, including the Law Institute of Victoria, and the LIV advised me:

... the LIV has some concerns relating both to the breadth of the category of 'applicable court data' and to the limited nature of the grounds on which the Chief Executive Officer of an applicable court can refuse to grant access to such data.

I do understand the concerns that have been raised by the Law Institute of Victoria in these matters, but if you look at the grounds on which a court chief executive can refuse to provide information, that can occur if the CEO considers that it would be likely or reasonably likely to prejudice the trial of a person or the impartial adjudication of an applicable case. I think that is not an unreasonable safeguard to put in place. So acknowledging the concerns of the law institute – and I thank them for taking the time, as they always do, to respond to my requests for their views on justice portfolio matters – I do not believe that their concerns are sufficient reason to amend the bill at this point.

The bill also clarifies the admissibility of electronic signatures in criminal proceedings. It does so by inserting a new section into the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 to permit electronic signing on all documents under the Criminal Procedure Act regardless of whether any other person does or does not consent. I do not think that this is a particularly controversial change, and I think it is one that acknowledges that we are in 2024. We sign all sorts of things electronically these days, and there is no reason why the criminal justice system should be immune from moving on from the sort of stagecoach, Cobb and Co format, which I know some lawyers are very wedded to. We do need to move into the 21st century, and I think that change to permit the use of electronic signatures in criminal proceedings is a sensible one.

The bill also, importantly, repeals section 387P of the Criminal Procedure Act. In doing so it removes the sunset provision in the act, which would otherwise operate this year. The effect of this is to enable the ongoing use of digitally recorded evidence-in-chief of the complainant in family violence proceedings. I think we are all very conscious of how difficult the justice system can be for victim-survivors of family violence. We understand that having to relate what has occurred for a victim-survivor is challenging. It is challenging from an emotional point of view; it is challenging sometimes from a physical point of view and certainly in terms of mental health. So I do not think it is

unreasonable for criminal justice legislation to try to provide sensible accommodations to make that process as least burdensome as possible for victim-survivors of family violence.

Removing the sunset provision will ensure that digitally recorded evidence-in-chief in family violence proceedings can continue to be used. There are safeguards contained within the Criminal Procedure Act which must be observed before a digitally recorded statement can be admitted as evidence-in-chief, and those safeguards will remain. And importantly for anybody who might be watching or reading this contribution, one of the safeguards is obviously that even if a complainant can make a digitally recorded statement which can be used in evidence-in-chief, that person must still be available to be cross-examined. It is important in any serious matter – and family violence matters are very serious matters – that anybody's claim can be tested by the person against whom it is made. That is a fundamental part of our justice system. I just want to assure Victorians that notwithstanding the continuation of the use of digitally recorded evidence-in-chief statements, there will still be guaranteed opportunities for that evidence to be tested through cross-examination in the normal process.

Moving on to defamation law, there are two significant changes made in relation to defamation law in this bill. The first is to extend the defence of absolute privilege to matters published to officials of Australian police forces or services who are acting in their official capacity. That means that the defence of absolute privilege will protect any means of communicating with state, territory or Commonwealth police, including informal reports, email inquiries or using online reporting tools. At the moment somebody who makes an allegation against another person in reporting a matter to police can arguably use the defence of qualified privilege. I say this as somebody who used to dabble a little bit in defamation law when I was practising: qualified privilege effectively operates where somebody has a duty or an obligation to provide information to another party. For example, if somebody was a member of a bowls club and they were of the view that somebody, let us say the treasurer, had misappropriated some funds, there might be an obligation to report that to the committee. In those sorts of circumstances there may be a defence of qualified privilege available.

The difference between qualified privilege and absolute privilege is that we in this place enjoy absolute privilege. Anything we say in this place is incapable of founding an action against us. Obviously after taking the 10 steps to courage, as they say, and walking out of the chamber, it is a different matter, but while we are in here we have the benefit of absolute privilege for everything we say. Obviously we have a concomitant obligation to not abuse that absolute privilege, and that is why we have rules and standing orders and procedures to ensure that happens, as well as the firm but fair guidance of you, Deputy Speaker.

When it comes to reporting allegations, particularly allegations that can be of a personal nature, such as allegations of sexual offence or family violence, you do not want to see a victim – or an alleged victim, depending on your terminology – concerned about making a complaint to police, worried that they might get sued for defamation by the person against whom they have complained. That chilling effect is not something that we want to see. It is important that people have the ability to freely communicate with police when they have suffered a crime, so I think on that basis that this can and should be supported.

In my consultation on the defamation-related matters in this bill I thought, 'Well, if you want to get good advice on defamation, there are probably only two people in this state you really want to go to.' One of them is Peter Bartlett from MinterEllison – I would say a legendary partner of MinterEllison and a legend in relation to defamation law in this state. The other is Dr Matt Collins AM KC, who literally wrote the book on defamation law in this country. *Collins on Defamation* is still, I think, regarded as the most authoritative text on the subject. Of course Dr Collins was most recently in the news for acting for Network Ten in relation to the Lehrmann defamation case, and I understand that the YouTube count was over a hundred thousand people or something – extraordinary numbers – watching that defamation trial on a daily basis. I think between Matt Collins and Peter Bartlett I have gone to the two rockstars of defamation in Victoria, if not Australia, to get advice, so I will defer to

their expert knowledge on these subjects. I am very grateful; they did provide me with their feedback on the bill.

If I may, I will quote some comments provided to me by Peter Bartlett on this matter, because I think he can sum up this change far better than can I. He says:

Whilst the defence of qualified privilege will apply in most, if not all, cases of police reports being subject to a claim of defamation, the introduction of absolute privilege is a significant improvement.

Specifically, the defence of qualified privilege will often require time, money and court resources as a court will be required to consider all of the circumstances of the matter and whether qualified privilege would apply. Such proceedings can also be traumatising and harmful for the accused, where it is in relation to a police complaint they have made. In contrast, absolute privilege provides a full and final defence, such that the claim would not progress in the first instance ...

I think on that basis Peter Bartlett sets out the good sense in this provision. And for those who might express concerns about the potential for this to be abused, I would perhaps also, if I may, quote Dr Matt Collins, who says:

The risk of abuse seems to me to be modest and acceptable. A knowingly false statement to police is a criminal offence, so the risk is already attenuated ...

Dr Collins makes the point that while under this change you may not be sued for making a claim against a person in a report to police, if you knowingly make a false statement to police, that is still a criminal offence. So there is still a safeguard against people making false reports to police with the intent to damage another person because that will remain a criminal offence.

In terms of the defamation changes relating to digital intermediaries, these are changes which have been agreed to a large extent at a national level, although there has been very patchy implementation of those nationally agreed changes. The bill seeks to clarify the liability of digital intermediaries in defamation law, and the term 'digital intermediary' describes a person other than an author, originator or poster of the matter who provides or administers the online service connected to the publication. It includes a broad range of online functions, including internet service providers, content hosts, search engines and social media platforms.

In America the situation in relation to digital intermediaries is very different. In America they effectively have complete immunity. So the Americans take the view that if you are Twitter/X or Instagram or Facebook you are effectively like Australia Post and you are effectively like Telstra. You are simply a carrier of a message, but you are not responsible for the content of that message any more than you would sue Telstra if someone made a libellous phone call or in the same way you would not sue Australia Post if somebody sent a defamatory letter in the mail. That is the American position. It is fairly absolutist. I think it is influenced by their first amendment in terms of freedom of speech.

In countries like Australia and the UK it has not been quite so clear cut. Australian courts have not tended to treat internet platforms in the same way as our American colleagues do. Because there have been different views of different courts and different jurisdictions, there was a push through the Standing Council of Attorneys-General to try and have some uniformity apply in relation to these matters. That does make sense, given that we are talking about internet platforms which reach not just across Australia but globally as well. What the bill seeks to do in relation to these matters is six key reforms to the Defamation Act 2005. The first is to provide statutory exemptions for digital caching, conduit and storage services. Effectively where you are providing those sorts of services, if you can meet a number of criteria – so you did not initiate steps to publish the matter, you did not select any of the recipients of the matter, you did not encourage the poster of the matter to publish it, you did not edit the content of the matter and you did not promote the matter – and if you simply operate effectively a storage service or a conduit service or a caching service, then that provides you with an immunity from defamation, or a defence at least.

It also provides statutory exemptions for search engine providers. A search engine provider – Google, for example – will not be liable for defamation where it is limited to providing an automated process for the user of the search engine to generate the results or providing a hyperlink. Importantly – and I think this is an important qualification to that defence – the defence is not available where the search results are promoted or prioritised because of a payment or other benefit given to the provider by or on behalf of a third party. So if you are Google and you want to make money out of effectively running ads by promoting particular search results and those search results are defamatory, then the Googles of the world will not be able to avail themselves of the defence, and I think that that is appropriate.

The bill would also amend laws applicable to preliminary discovery. One of the challenges we face in the digital world in the defamation sphere is that sometimes somebody can post something absolutely horrible and defamatory, but they do it under an anonymous handle and you do not know who to sue. In Victoria we have procedures for what is called preliminary discovery, which is the ability to go to a court, for example, and to seek an order from an internet platform – from a Facebook or an Instagram or a Twitter – to identify the account holder who made that defamatory post so that the offended party then knows who to serve proceedings on. The bill requires a court considering an application for preliminary discovery in relation to digital matters to take into account the objects of the Defamation Act as well as privacy, safety or other public interest considerations that may arise if the order is made.

The bill gives the example of evidence suggesting that the poster of the digital matter is in fear of domestic violence in relation to any order to seek to obtain the poster's address. I would just say at that point: anonymous trolls can say horrible, horrible things about people that are completely untrue, and it is important and it is in the interests of justice for the people who do that to be exposed to the justice system. Obviously if there are genuine – and I emphasise genuine – issues relating to family violence and somebody genuinely makes anonymous posts then that is a matter that the court can and should consider. But the starting principle should be that anonymous internet trolls should not be able to hide behind that anonymity where they have smeared somebody, defamed somebody. They should be forced to answer for it in court should proceedings be issued.

One of the key issues in the bill is that it provides statutory exemptions for digital intermediaries – your Twitter account, for example. It will enable those social media accounts to have a defence against defamatory material posted by their subscribers, posted by the people who operate on that platform, but that defence comes with conditions that must be met. First of all, the defendant has to be a digital intermediary; second, the defendant has to have had at the time of the publication an accessible complaints mechanism for the defendant to use. This is really important because people have had trouble not necessarily with defamation but just trouble with their accounts – getting locked out or getting hacked – or difficulty trying to organise ads. Trying to find somebody at Facebook or Instagram or Twitter you can actually speak to or correspond with can be very, very difficult. They do not go out of their way to make themselves accessible. It is only fair that if this Parliament is to provide these platforms with a safe harbour from defamation, their obligation is to have a publicly facing, publicly available complaints mechanism that somebody who is aggrieved by a post on that platform can access. That is a very important part of the obligations on those intermediaries.

The other condition – and this is where we can argue about whether this goes far enough or goes too far – is that if the plaintiff gave the defendant a written complaint under the section about the publication, the platform needs to take reasonable access prevention steps within seven days after the complaint is given. What is a reasonable access prevention step? It means removing the matter or blocking, disabling or otherwise preventing access, whether by some or all persons, to the matter. Effectively this means that from the time you lodge a complaint through the publicly available complaints mechanism that the platform is required to provide, the platform then gets seven days to take down that matter or to otherwise restrict it in a way provided for under the act.

If somebody has said something absolutely disgraceful, something massively damaging to your reputation and completely untrue – they would not say it about you, Deputy Speaker, but perhaps some other members of the house – having something up there for seven days is a really long time to have

your reputation trashed. In this day and age, when we have got a media cycle that operates in minutes, not hours or days, for something terribly defamatory to be in the public sphere for seven days is a very long period of time. I think that reasonable minds can argue that seven days is too long, because if you looked at it from the perspective of a person who has been defamed, you would want and expect quicker action than seven days. But this is where, nationally, the agreement has effectively landed. Seven days is the right balance, and when you consider there may be potentially dozens or hundreds or thousands of complaints made, depending on what is happening at the time, there is a need to give the platforms a reasonable time to consider complaints and to respond.

We also do not want to see a situation where anybody can complain about anything and platforms have to take down every single criticism. We are all public figures; we have all got platforms. We all get criticised from time to time, sometimes fairly and sometimes it might feel unfair, but we do not want to see a situation where members of the public are too scared to make an adverse comment about an elected representative. I think most of us have got pretty thick skin; you sort of have to do this job. We need to get a balance between overreactions, chilling free speech, and not having any protection for people whose reputations are absolutely slandered and defamed on digital online platforms. On this basis, while you can argue about whether or not seven days is the appropriate period of time, we are prepared to accept that that is not an unreasonable place for us to land.

In the very brief time left available to me, there are a number of changes made to integrity agencies legislation in this bill. One of the key ones is to change the name of the Victorian Inspectorate to Integrity Oversight Victoria, and as the CEO of the VI wrote to me:

... it perfectly sums up the purpose and role of the Victorian Inspectorate in overseeing integrity, accountability and investigatory bodies and officers.

We will not be moving any amendments to this point, but potentially in the other place there may be a need to look at amendments to proposed new section 97AA(4) and the question of whether there should be an additional exemption for the purpose of making a complaint or a public interest disclosure to the Integrity and Oversight Committee. I just place that on the record as something that we will be pondering over the winter break and the government may want to ponder as well.

I also note that the bill provides that the Premier will get advance notice of basically all reports to Parliament made by integrity agencies. I just wonder whether it is really necessary for the Premier to get advance notice about every single integrity agency report being made to Parliament. It does look like a mechanism to allow for governmental spin to be prioritised over everything else. Having said that, it is a large bill – a complex bill. It does contain what we think some important improvements to laws, and on that basis the Liberals and Nationals will not be opposing this bill.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (10:41): I am very pleased to rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024. I want to pay respect to the member for Malvern for very thoroughly transacting the bill at hand. Respect where respect is due, of course. I am just doing the overview first. I have only got 10 minutes, so I have got to be pretty swift. The improvements that this bill will deliver include improving access to court data, improving accessibility of evidence in court proceedings, improving national defamation law and implementing minor and technical but long-awaited changes to integrity legislation.

First and foremost, I would like to zone in on the women's safety elements, noting that, whilst we have of course implemented all 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and dedicated arguably more money and effort than any other Australian government ever, we are continually examining and probing and advancing reforms to make sure we are doing everything possible to tackle and to end, essentially, the scourge of family violence. When it comes to the women's safety reforms within this bill, the first one – which has been spoken to, but I will also allude to it because it is very important – is a complete defence to defamation over reports made to police. The defence does apply to all reports made to police, and that should be noted. But the reforms were developed to address the chilling effect that a threat of defamation can have on reporting of sexual

assault or harassment. Of course what we are trying to do is encourage victim-survivors of family violence to come forth and make those critical reports – getting that evidence in there early is essential; it is really, really important – and also seek the requisite help that they need, whether it be counselling or otherwise. But they do have a fully informed process should they wish to proceed with taking action against perpetrators.

Second, the bill extends the use of digitally recorded evidence by police-worn cameras as evidence-in-chief in family violence proceedings. This will continue to provide greater options to victim-survivors, noting that there was a trial and it has been deemed that that trial has provided a satisfactory response. With ‘satisfactory’ I may be understating the benefit, but for the sake of not embellishing or otherwise in this context it is deemed an appropriate mechanism that can be availed by victim-survivors. Particularly it allows them the opportunity to give a report to police in their own words. I have not had to give evidence as such in a court proceeding, in a criminal matter or otherwise, but having seen that, I know and we know that with our memory, the closer to the moment that you are able to give that evidence, the better. So being able to give that evidence in situ certainly has got to be helpful. But it is certainly not compulsory for the particular victim-survivor; they do have the alternative of a written statement as well. It does not resile, as has been noted, from the appropriateness of cross-examination of evidence, because it is important, when we are looking at evidence, that it is appropriately transacted and checked, for want of a better word, or verified by the court to ascertain the case at hand and the validity of the case and the various matters being brought before the court.

We are proud certainly as a government – and I say that very carefully and in a prudent manner – to continue delivering our strong community and women’s safety agenda, because it is the right thing to do. No-one likes to see anyone be a victim of family violence, so progressing these kinds of reforms that one would hope would encourage victim-survivors to have the confidence to come forward is a good thing. It was just a few weeks ago that we announced further measures to build on the ambitious agenda, which will change laws, change culture and deliver new support for victim-survivors as well. Really it is about being able to better respond to victims when violence occurs, deliver a stronger justice response that holds offenders to account and continue our world-leading prevention response, stopping violence before it starts.

I think it must be acknowledged that our justice system has come a long way in responding to family violence and violence against women. But of course there is more that we can do. I am pleased to see that we are inching forward with these kinds of very important reforms when it comes to providing mechanisms that better support victim-survivors in providing evidence to court and making sure that they do not fear what has already been mentioned in the chamber: defamation for bringing forward a police report against a perpetrator. The recent package highlights some of the upcoming justice reforms around family violence intervention orders, stalking and personal safety as well. But even the reforms in this bill illustrate that women’s safety is always on our justice reform agenda, and our government takes any opportunity to improve how our laws and system can better respond to violence against women. So this is continuing work; this is not an end point of course.

We have already been speaking about amending the Crime Statistics Act 2014 to permit the chief statistician to require courts to provide certain data on request, and what is at the heart of this is actually a very pragmatic element, because it will provide government with much more detailed information as to the impact of legislative reforms on the criminal justice system. Obviously we are always working hard to continually improve outcomes with the criminal justice system, and this provides another mechanism to be able to critically examine legislative reforms and to help inform future policy as well, with appropriate caveats – on the one hand, how that particular data is accessed, and protections around the data as well so it does not fall into inappropriate hands. On that note, the amendments provide that the courts can refuse to share data in narrow circumstances, such as in the unlikely event that the data sharing would affect the fair trial of a person. One has to say that fairness has to underpin the justice system and the processes that go through the justice system, so having that important caveat seems to be good common sense. Identified data held by the chief statistician is subject to rigorous security

measures, making it very unlikely that such circumstances would arise, and I just say that because obviously this kind of data can be very sensitive but at the same time be very helpful in informing policy and the continual improvement of our justice system.

On a further note, I did just want to speak briefly to extending digitally recorded evidence. The bill will enable the ongoing use of digitally recorded evidence-in-chief in family violence offence or family violence intervention order proceedings. I did state that from the outset, but I am just emphasising a further point. It can facilitate the early resolution of cases, reduce the burden on frontline police and help to hold perpetrators to account. I meant to mention that from the outset. These are further advantages that we can see from availing this form of providing evidence for evidence-in-chief in the chamber. The sunset date was included in the division because it was originally on a trial basis, but of course those matters have been duly acquitted.

I have only got 25 seconds. The bill will amend the model defamation provisions in the Defamation Act 2005 to clarify the liability of digital intermediaries when third parties use their online services to publish defamatory matter and extend the defence of absolute privilege to matter published to police. So I am just circling back to my original premise, and that is to ensure that we encourage victims of family violence to come forward.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:51): I am delighted to rise and make a contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024. I want to flag early that I may not need my entire time on this, because the member for Malvern made a very clear and concise contribution on this bill. Without just putting 'ditto' and saying, 'Read the member for Malvern in *Hansard*,' I want to make a brief contribution on some of the parts of this bill.

We do know that the bill does look at crime statistics – which were released today, and not that well either; I did not think they were going to – electronic signatures, digitally recorded evidence in some cases, and I believe that is in regard to police-worn cameras, and various defamation offences. It will also amend the Public Interest Monitor Act 2011 and many, many other matters. It does cover off on a lot of housekeeping, for want of a better word. I think the most important part is that it will extend the defence of absolute privilege to reports made to police. As has been explained earlier, this protects in the event that an alleged perpetrator tries to bring a defamation suit against someone who reported an offence, therefore granting them complete immunity. I think this goes to our attitude not just in the government but in the whole state of Victoria of 'If you see something, say something'. I know there are cultures around the world where if you see something, you shut up and keep walking, and we do not want to be in that situation. Without turning us into any more of a nanny state, I am certainly a supporter of any notion or any laws that give people the courage or the confidence to speak up.

Under Victorian Labor we have seen a massive increase in violence and violence against women, as was mentioned by the member for Albert Park. Not a day goes past that we do not see something on the news, whether it is in metropolitan Melbourne or regional Victoria. This bill supports all of our endeavours to make sure that violence against women – this cowardly behaviour, this gutless behaviour – is prevented. We want to do all we can to stop this occurring in our communities. It will probably never stop. We would like to think it could stop one day, but I think we just have to continue to improve how we keep our processes going forward to reduce the amount of violence against women and all people in our community.

I will touch on the digital intermediary – Twitter, Facebook, social media. We know that the current laws are very broad and the common-law test for publication is also very broad. Currently anyone who contributes to the publication of defamatory work is seen as a publisher, and that means a digital intermediary can also be liable. We have heard about cases in America and how this bill will certainly strike that balance. Digital platforms will only be able to avoid defamation where they have an accessible complaints mechanism – that is the seven days that we heard the member for Malvern talking about. If they receive that complaint and put in place access prevention steps, that can certainly resolve that issue. Of course if they do not, then obviously defamation may still have occurred. At the

end of the day, as the member for Malvern said, is seven days too long or is it too short? Maybe that is something that could be revisited somewhere down the track – who knows. But certainly you do have to pick a number, and today's number is seven days, so we will stick with that for the time being. We all know about Facebook trolls. We all see those keyboard cowards in our communities and on our Facebook, those people wanting to comment. But it is not about us; I think it is more about young people. We see that younger children are getting access to social media at a much younger age – whether that is the parents' fault or whoever's fault does not matter. These children are getting access to social media, and again we need to do all we can to protect these young people from being bullied and harassed, because we see some terrible outcomes that have come because of social media. I think there is a lot more work we can do in this space as we go forward, but I think that is more of a national discussion than necessarily a state discussion.

We know that it also amends the Victorian Inspectorate Act 2011. Clause 105 expands whether the Premier will get an advance copy of certain integrity reports. Previously that was limited to the Attorney-General and the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Community Safety; clause 105 will now include the Premier and the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Again, I do not have a problem with that advance copy, provided the public know that that is the case. We cannot continue to have this secretive government with people not knowing what is being advanced to the Premier. If that is the case, that is fine; as long as everybody does know about it, I am okay with that. Clauses 70 through 72 amend the Racing Act 1958 to amend the racing integrity commissioner's power to issue a confidentiality notice. Racing is a massive industry in our state. In fact they are racing in Wangaratta today. There is a tip in race 9. You may need to speak to the Shadow Minister for Racing. There is a horse in race 7 that he fancies, so it might be worth having a chat to him. It might be an omen bet, I think – it has got something to do with nuclear. But obviously Sean Barrett and Bill Carlisle's integrity is absolutely the utmost in Wangaratta. Anyway, in this bill anything we can do that puts steps in place to improve any corruption or impropriety in the racing industry is always very much welcome. Clause 106 amends section 88 of the Victorian Inspectorate Act 2011 and will expand circumstances where the Victorian Inspectorate may give advice of the outcome of an investigation or inquiry.

The amendment to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 clarifies that a person is not entitled to obtain access to documents under part III which contain information that is open to public access, whether or not that access is free. I think that is a good step forward. It also clarifies that an agency must comply with notification requirements if reasonably practical to do so. It will enable the information commissioner to make preliminary inquiries and consult parties to determine whether a matter can be informally resolved but more importantly will require the information commissioner to assist individuals to make a complaint in writing if they are unable to do so. This will amend the process by which the information commissioner can issue confidentiality notices during an investigation into a public interest complaint.

The bill will also clarify that the Victorian Inspectorate rather than the IBAC has responsibility for monitoring compliance and procedural fairness requirements in the issuing of a confidentiality notice, and of course it will require the information commissioner to give a written report to the Victorian Inspectorate, specifying the details of a variation or revocation as it relates to notices to produce or attend that have been issued. It also amends the existing requirements to be met by the information commissioner after inspecting a document claimed by an agency or a minister to be exempt.

It does cover off on many other amendments and many other acts: the Freedom of Information Act 1982, the Judicial Commission of Victoria Act 2016, the Local Government Act 2020 and the Ombudsman Act 1973. As I said, it tidies up lots of acts, and I did commit to the fact that I was not going to go my full time. But I want to flag that I will finish a little early, that I do support the comments by the member for Malvern and that we will not be opposing this bill.

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (10:59): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate and speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024. This is a bill which proposes a variety of small but important improvements for our justice system and our integrity agencies. As always, I would like to thank the Attorney-General for the work that she is doing in the justice space as well as her very hardworking ministerial office and the department for the work they did on the reforms in this bill, which has included consultation with a vast number of relevant government bodies and stakeholders.

Among amendments proposed in the bill today are those impacting particularly on women's safety, an issue that it is very, very important to me, including the removal of a potential deterrent to making reports to police and making permanent the option to use digitally recorded body camera evidence as statements in family violence proceedings. I am proud that the Allan Labor government is continuing to deliver our strong community and women's safety agenda. Victoria is leading the nation in the prevention of family violence and the focus on women's safety. We have implemented all 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and dedicated more money and more effort than any other Australian government, but we know there is more work to do. I would like to acknowledge that we have got the Minister for Consumer Affairs in the Parliament and the role that she has played as the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, a really, really important role in terms of the implementation of those recommendations from the royal commission.

Just a few weeks ago, the Allan Labor government announced further measures to build on our ambitious agenda, which will change laws, change culture and deliver new support for victim-survivors, with upcoming justice reforms around family violence, intervention orders, stalking and personal safety. These reforms will enable a better response for victims when violence occurs, and further, these reforms will deliver a stronger justice response that holds offenders to account and continues Victoria's world-leading prevention response, stopping violence before it starts. Significantly we are rolling out the saturation model in my community of Ballarat, a first for Victoria and Australia, following the murders of Samantha Murphy, Rebecca Young and Hannah McGuire earlier this year in my community, a model that will support new and existing programs and activities to change attitudes and behaviours and that will drive down violence against women and girls.

The Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024 proposes a variety of improvements, including to the use of evidence in family violence proceedings, to defamation law in relation to online content as well as reports to police, to the use of electronic signatures in criminal matters, to the provision of court data for statistical analysis and to the operation of several Victorian integrity agencies. In order to achieve this, amendments are made to more than a dozen pieces of Victorian legislation, including the Defamation Act 2005, the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Crime Statistics Act 2014.

One minor amendment with important implications is the repeal of section 387P of the Criminal Procedure Act 2009, which will permanently expand the statement options for proceedings related to family violence offences and family violence intervention orders. It will do so through allowing the use of digitally recorded evidence-in-chief, a statement recorded by police as soon as practicable after a family violence incident, using a body-worn camera. Allowing victim-survivors the option of using recorded evidence in family violence proceedings means that they are not required to relive their experience later on in order to produce a statement in writing or in a police interview. Instead these recordings can be used in court in the place of a written statement. This is very important – not re-traumatising victims who have already suffered so much. This can be a vastly improved process for victim-survivors. The resulting digital evidence can also be more powerful, as well as less easily minimised, than a written statement read aloud by a judge. Other benefits may include the earlier resolution of cases and a reduced burden on police. In Victoria the use of digitally recorded evidence in family violence proceedings was introduced on a trial basis starting from 2018 following recommendations from the 2015 Royal Commission into Family Violence. However, as it stands, this trial is set to conclude in October. The bill removes that sunset provision from the Criminal Procedure

Act 2009 so that digitally recorded evidence will remain an ongoing option for family violence proceedings.

This bill will also amend defamation law to remove a potential barrier to reporting crimes to police. Concerns regarding the potential for defamation action and in some cases the outright use of this possibility as a threat have the potential to dissuade victim-survivors from seeking police assistance. This is addressed through amendments to the Defamation Act 2005, which will extend the defence of absolute privilege to all reports made to police. The defence of absolute privilege currently applies to certain proceedings from courts, tribunals and parliaments, meaning that statements in these contexts are completely immune to defamation suits. When applicable this can lead to the summary dismissal of defamation proceedings or discourage them from commencing at all. Without absolute privilege the alternative defence of qualified privilege would require proving that several criteria have been met through time-consuming, stressful and potentially retraumatising court hearings. Victim-survivors should be able to report to police and be absolutely secure in the knowledge that they will not be subject to defamation proceedings as a result. There should be no doubt for anyone that reporting to police is not defamatory, and these amendments will ensure that.

Other amendments to the Defamation Act relate to digital intermediaries, being third parties that provide or administer online services where content is published. This could cover a search engine or a social media platform, for example, or even a person who sets up a page on a social media platform. A digital intermediary is not the original author or poster of potentially defamatory content but rather someone who has provided the means for that content to be disseminated. Our current defamation laws are ill equipped when it comes to the liability of digital intermediaries, and greater clarity is needed. To this end this bill proposes reforms that will exempt a certain class of automatically generated search results from defamation claims; allow materials of amends made in response to defamation claims to include offers to block content; require that courts consider certain matters, including privacy and safety, before granting discovery orders in defamation proceedings; provide a defence for digital intermediaries if they have sufficiently effective mechanisms to receive and action complaints; empower courts to order that digital intermediaries remove access to defamatory material from their platforms; and facilitate the electronic provision of defamation-related documents when indicated. Together these reforms will better equip our justice system to deal with defamatory content in the digital age.

The bill will also clarify some current uncertainty surrounding the use of electronic signatures in criminal proceedings. With the proposed changes electronic signatures will be valid for all documents under the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 without requiring any specific consent from the receiving party. This will reduce the administrative burden on police and courts as well as improve processes for all involved, as witnesses will have the choice of signing electronic documents out in the community rather than attending a police station to sign hard copies.

Another area that I will quickly talk about is court data, and it is a key aspect of this bill in statistical analysis and policy creation. Currently the chief statistician can require the provision of police law enforcement data for use in research and reporting, yet the same does not apply to data from our courts. The result – a lack of consistent data – hampers their ability to analyse trends and journeys across the justice system and use this analysis to better shape policy. We all want good policy and we want evidence-based policy to make our justice system better and fairer and safer, and that is why it is so important that we resolve issues regarding access to court data. With the time I have left I commend the bill to the house.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (11:09): I too rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024. Can I from the outset thank the member for Malvern for his comprehensive speech this morning on this piece of legislation and his huge amount of work over the past couple of weeks diving into the detail not only of this but of other legislation before the house this week. This is a comprehensive bill that covers a range of changes to justice legislation, including the collection of crime statistics, the use of electronic signatures in criminal proceedings, the use of

digitally recorded evidence-in-chief in family violence proceedings, defamation changes in relation to reporting offences, defamation changes in relation to defences available to internet platforms, amending the powers of the Public Interest Monitor and a range of other minor amendments to integrity agencies.

Can I start on the minor and technical changes that are made to crime statistics and particularly permitting greater access to court data for the chief statistician. Improving the chief statistician's capacity to analyse how individuals interact with the justice system will help us make more informed decisions on future justice reform opportunities. These reforms are badly needed because the justice system here in Victoria is failing to keep Victorians safe. It is timely that we are debating this bill today, when we saw the latest crime statistics for Victoria released this morning for the year ending March 2024. I would have thought maybe the manager of government business might have wanted to schedule this debate for yesterday, before these crime statistics were released this morning, because what we can see in the statistics that were released today is that crime in Victoria is up again. It has increased by 10 per cent over the year ending March 2024. At the same time that we are seeing crime rates increasing in Victoria, we are seeing police numbers down, with nearly 1000 vacancies across the state. As the member for Malvern spoke about, the lack of police resources and the vacancies when it comes to cops on the beat mean that police stations are having to close. They are having to reduce their hours, and Victorians are not feeling safe here in Victoria in their homes, in the streets or in their businesses.

When we look into the statistics this morning – and we are just diving into the detail now – what is clear is that youth crime is once again rising, with a 20.1 per cent increase. That is a huge increase year on year on top of the overall 10 per cent increase. In the City of Boroondara, where the electorate of Kew falls, we have seen a 6.9 per cent increase in crime across the board. If we look at the data from the previous release, the year ending December 2023, the statistics are incredibly concerning for my local community: a 69 per cent increase in aggravated burglary, a 54 per cent increase in motor vehicle theft and a 58 per cent increase in retail theft year on year. I do not go a day when I do not hear from a local resident or a local business owner that is concerned about their own safety or, in the case of small businesses, about theft attempts and people coming into their premises and into their places of work and attempting to commit a crime.

Aggravated burglaries in particular are keeping local residents up at night. People are breaking into their homes while they are trying to sleep, and they do not feel safe. We have situations where children are scared to be home. They do not feel safe in their own homes, and their parents come to me and say that the terror of having your home broken into at night, in the case of an aggravated burglary, is something that stays with you forever. There are many wonderful things about our local community, and I am sure we are at the top of the leaderboard in many different cases, but one issue that I am not proud to be at the top of the leaderboard in is in relation to aggravated burglaries. Eighty-three offences in the year to December 2023 in Balwyn and Balwyn North places those suburbs fifth on the aggravated burglary leaderboard in this state. People in Balwyn North and of course in Kew, Mont Albert and Canterbury are very, very concerned that there is nothing being done by this government to reduce the rate of aggravated burglary, and in many cases this is related to youth crime.

Can I also point to the increase of retail theft and aggravated theft on small businesses. Just a couple of months ago a local IGA in Willsmere Village in Kew was robbed by a group of young people wielding an axe and knives. The footage of this robbery is chilling. To see someone come into the village with an axe and hold that axe to the shop attendant's throat while the other three offenders rob the store is simply shocking, and it is something that left that shop attendant absolutely fearful for his life. And this is not the first time that this has occurred for this local small business owner, Danny Kashyap, who actually also owns an IGA in the member for Malvern's electorate. His Armadale IGA was also robbed at the same time. Danny has been very, very clear. He said, 'I feel very, very let down by the government.'

This is not an issue that is being addressed by this government. I heard the member for Albert Park say before that community safety is doing what it is right to do. Well, I would say it is actually a core responsibility of government to ensure that we have the resources so that our criminal justice system is working and to ensure that we see our crime statistics decrease rather than increase, as they have over the past 12 months. If you look across the board, whether it is car theft or car break-ins – we heard just last week that the member for Sandringham had a local community safety forum where it was advised to leave your keys on the front bench and put an AirTag in your car – this is simply not acceptable in the state of Victoria.

Can I take a moment, though, to thank the local Neighbourhood Watch groups in my area. Boroondara Neighbourhood Watch, run by Suzanne Dunlop and George Offord, do an enormous amount of work not only to shine a light on the local crime issues in our area but to make sure the community are well aware of the steps they can take to help keep themselves safe. On that note, can I also thank our local Boroondara police, led by Inspector Sandy McIver. They do an incredible job under Inspector McIver's leadership of responding to crime in our area. Victoria Police are doing their job but they are under-resourced, and time and time again right across the board here in this state they will say to us that they are able to catch offenders but by the time they finish their shift in the morning they are out on bail. We know in March this year the Allan government weakened bail laws in this state, abolishing the offences of breaching bail conditions and committing an indictable offence whilst on bail. This has resulted in what we are seeing today in the crime statistics and the increase in particular when it comes to youth crime. We are seeing more and more offenders committing crimes, getting released on bail and committing those crimes time and time again, terrifying our local communities and ensuring that Victorians do not feel safe at night.

We also see that the Labor Party intends to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 this year, further weakening laws to tackle youth offending. This is at a time when we know that the current system is not working, is not keeping Victorians safe, and we need to make sure that at the very core of what we do as elected representatives here in the Parliament is put community safety first and foremost. It is a non-negotiable for government to prioritise the community safety of Victorians and of our local communities. What we have seen today is an increase in crime rates right across the board and a 10 per cent increase here in Victoria. We are seeing a thousand vacancies when it comes to Victoria Police, and unfortunately Victorians do not feel safe in this state.

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (11:19): I am very happy to rise to make my contribution to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024. It is a very big bill with many facets and nuances, and I would like to thank the member for Malvern for his contribution. It was great to hear your inside voice for a change; I appreciate that. But I certainly did –

Michael O'Brien interjected.

Paul MERCURIO: Like the member for Ovens Valley, I feel like you have covered it pretty well and I might just sit down, but my community did give me a seat at the table and I will take the opportunity to continue. From memory – and I have only been here for a year and a half – this bill is so big that the second-reading speech, which is normally about two pages, is 14 pages long, so there is a heck of a lot of information in this bill, and I thank everyone who worked on it.

Just so the people at home get an idea of the amount of changes in this bill, I will outline that this bill is for an act to amend the Crime Statistics Act 2014, the Criminal Procedure Act 2009, the Defamation Act 2005, the Freedom of Information Act 1982, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011, the Judicial Commission of Victoria Act 2016, the Local Government Act 2020, the Ombudsman Act 1973, the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014, the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012, the Public Interest Monitor Act 2011, the Racing Act 1958, the Spent Convictions Act 2021, the Surveillance Devices Act 1999, the Telecommunications (Interception) (State Provisions) Act 1988, the Victorian Inspectorate Act 2011 and more – and I am exhausted, but I will keep going with a little more detail.

This bill will make changes to the Crime Statistics Act 2014 so that the chief statistician can access court data, will amend the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 so that electronically signed documents are admissible in criminal proceedings and will allow the continued use of digitally recorded statements. It will make technical and procedural amendments to various integrity and justice acts to improve how they operate. It will also amend an act that the Leader of the Opposition would be well aware of, the Defamation Act 2005, so that nationally developed reforms can be enacted. Essentially this bill is bringing our justice system up to speed in 2024 by allowing things we all do in everyday life, like electronically signing documents, and by extending the use of digitally recorded evidence so there are more options for our victim-survivors so they are not burdened any more than they need to be as they go through the justice system.

We also know that a good number of people within our communities want to see our justice system perform the best it can, and this bill provides the chance for our justice system to improve. Allowing the chief statistician to access court data helps them understand how people interact with our justice system from the first time they talk with police up until the very final outcome in the courts. They use this data to make linkages with other data so they can develop better policies, identify what may be causes of concern in the future and bolster the delivery of justice services.

Some might be listening to this and thinking, ‘Doesn’t this open it up to people accessing data that they shouldn’t be seeing?’ Well, this bill ensures that only authorised people will be able to access court data and also makes sure that unauthorised access or disclosure of data is an offence and can land a perpetrator in prison for up to five years. The chief statistician will work within the framework of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014, and this bill also provides protection to ensure that the chief statistician can only access data that is needed for statistical analysis. Just that measure alone for the use of digitally recorded evidence will help protect victim-survivors, who are predominantly women. This government will always do what it can to protect the safety of women in our community.

This bill also makes very pragmatic changes, like allowing the use of electronic signatures, bringing parts of our justice system into the year 2024, as electronic signatures are used by a variety of different organisations and systems these days. This reform will resolve any ambiguity, enable justice agencies to confidently use existing technology to capture signatures electronically and increase agency efficiencies and reduce system delays. If you do still want to sign physically, that is an option that will remain available. It is just about making things more accessible and efficient.

The bill also makes important changes to provisions in the Defamation Act 2005, and one of these crucial changes is to extend the defence of absolute privilege to matters published to police. These are reforms led by Victoria and are aimed at addressing what effect the threat of defamation can have on sexual violence and harassment reporting. It amends section 27 of the Defamation Act to extend the defence of absolute privilege to reports published to officials of Australian police forces or services acting in their official capacity, providing a complete immunity and defence to a defamation claim. This provides vitally crucial certainty to those who are reporting matters to police, knowing they will be protected against a defamation suit for that report. This just removes another barrier that people sometimes face when making the decision to go to the police or not. Victims should absolutely feel confident and comfortable making reports to police and not be scared under a cloud of a potentially long and costly defamation suit.

When it comes to sexual harassment and violence, victims should absolutely feel like they are protected in sharing what has happened to them with police. For too long have we seen massive amounts of under-reporting based on many different factors, but one we all hear about way too often is that they are fearful to come forward. They are fearful to report because it may come back to the perpetrator, who could then use many avenues to inflict more pain, stress and anxiety. This could be done through a defamation suit, which is not only a long process but a massive financial burden to someone going through an awful time. This bill will bring down that barrier, and if it only helps one person to have the confidence within themselves to report, then that is a win in my eyes.

One of the other wins in my eyes is the ongoing use of digitally recorded evidence-in-chief in family violence proceedings. One of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence was recommendation 58, which encouraged and supported a trial of digitally recorded evidence, primarily from body-worn cameras on police officers. The first trial was started in 2018 and was subsequently extended through to June 2023. But there was a sunset clause put in for the trial, and that is now due to be repealed in October 2024.

Allowing the use of digitally recorded evidence-in-chief means that victim-survivors of a family violence incident can continue to have a choice to make a statement either via a police-issued body-worn camera or in writing. The strength of this means it allows the victim-survivor to provide their statement in their own words at the time of the incident, which can obviously be a far more powerful tool than a statement which was written down at a later date. It is also considered that providing a statement in this way may eliminate or minimise the need for a victim to relive their experiences when giving an interview at a later date. Additionally, there is some anecdotal evidence and there are reports that recorded evidence can lead to the accused entering a guilty plea earlier to proceedings thanks to them being able to physically see the video evidence from the scene of an alleged domestic violence incident, and I think that is an absolutely fantastic thing.

As mentioned previously, this bill is also making various technical and procedural amendments to a variety of integrity and justice acts to improve the operation and effectiveness of our integrity agencies, such as changing the name of the Victorian Inspectorate to Integrity Oversight Victoria and the Inspector to the Chief Integrity Inspector. These are very simple changes but will make the public better understand what their roles are, and I certainly agree with that. It provides greater protection of information about a person's sexual orientation under the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014, enables search warrants to be issued to allow an IBAC-authorised officer or a police officer to execute a search warrant and delivers on procedural amendments to the Freedom of Information Act to support better administration processes.

To summarise this debate, the passing of this bill will provide more avenues for victim-survivors of sexual harassment and violence to report to police and allow greater access to court data for the chief statistician so they can find ways of improving our justice system from top to bottom. Also, this bill makes some minor but needed amendments to a few justice and integrity acts so those agencies can run more effectively. I see this bill as improving justice and integrity and, crucially, providing protections for those dealing with the awful scourge that is sexual harassment and violence. I commend this bill to the house.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (11:29): I am pleased to rise today to contribute to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024, and a very big shout-out to the member for Malvern for the absolutely comprehensive contribution that he made. I dare say after the work he has had to do in the last couple of weeks he is looking forward to the winter break – very much so.

A member interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: Well, it is cold, Minister. I had a beanie on this morning myself. I would wear one in the chamber if I could. The bill is an omnibus bill covering a variety of different matters involving crime statistics; the use of electronic signatures in criminal proceedings; allowing the ongoing use of digitally recorded evidence in family violence proceedings; defamation changes in relation to reporting offences; defamation changes relating to defences available to internet platforms; the amendment of the powers of the Public Interest Monitor, or the PIM, under two statutes; and a variety of amendments to integrity agencies operating in Victoria.

I will start on the crime statistics. I was disappointed today on the release of the crime statistics to see that for my electorate of Narracan the crime statistics have gone up 12 per cent. That is very disappointing. At the moment in my electorate we are struggling for police numbers. I actually do

need a new police station in Drouin. I need a 24/7 police station in Drouin because of the influx of population into Drouin, and that has not been forthcoming. The police station they are currently working in was built in 1974 and is pretty well not fit for purpose – not to mention Trafalgar, which also needs a police station 24/7 and also my community of Rawson, which is right up in the very north of my electorate. That has a one-man station. We will now lose that station and the closest police response to there will be 40 minutes away. I think in the year 2024 any community deserves to be safe.

We can see that by the rise in aggravated burglaries in homes across Victoria it is not just isolated to the electorate of Narracan. We see them on the news every night. We can see our communities now are fearful at night. Once upon a time – and I have been guilty of this many times – I used to leave my doors unlocked and my garage door open with my keys in the car. I might have got home a little late and forgot to lock everything up, but I was never worried about an aggravated burglary. Well, I do not do that today, especially in the position I am in now, because unfortunately people do know where I live. I keep my house well and truly locked up. I think our communities deserve to feel safe. The only way we can do that is through policing, and at the moment we are about 1000 officers short in the state, which is obviously making our community feel on edge.

It was interesting to note when the statistics came out that retail theft has increased quite considerably. There is some narrative around that that the increase in retail theft is to do with cost-of-living pressures. People cannot afford to eat, so they are stealing. I think it is beholden on this government to really get cost of living under control to help in that retail theft space.

But what I really do want to touch on today in particular is the social media aspect of the bill and the defamation section of the bill around social media. I have some fairly strong views on social media. Today in the space around social media I am actually really pleased to see this defamation section come into it, but I do not think we go far enough on social media and in social media safety, especially for younger adults in our community. What is concerning me more and more on social media is the trolls we get. I do not think anyone in this chamber is immune to a social media troll. They can post some pretty average stuff about MPs or whatever, but this is not about us. What I would like to see in the social media space is all accounts having to be verified, because if all of a sudden all accounts on social media are verified accounts, it is easier to track the person that is committing the gross content or the defamatory content or the violent content. I think that would be a good step forward in society and also to protect our young people.

It is unfortunate now with social media. When I was kid and I came home from school, I was safe. Once I got through my doors no-one could bully me anymore. I was at home with Mum and Dad. It was a safe space. I do feel really sorry for our youth today that when they get home they are not safe through cyberbullying, and we have seen time and time again young adults and teenagers committing suicide because of cyberbullying. I think we need to focus in on the social media side of things. I really do think every account should be verified so you can backtrack to the moron that is putting the posts up. I think it is really important. I think our youth deserve to grow up feeling safe at home, feeling safe when they open their phone. I think at the moment – and I am not going to aim this at the state government, because I think it is probably more a federal issue – we need to do this Australia-wide. I think we need to take a step in the right direction on that, and I think that will go a long way, especially for youth to have better mental health, if they know they are protected when they open their phone.

My other point to this, and I have mentioned it in this chamber previously, is the people that video violence for clicks or likes. I have said this before in the chamber: I think it is gutless. It really annoys me, it really does, that you see people videoing something going on rather than helping. I can appreciate not everyone can jump in and help. Not everybody has that physical ability to prevent someone getting bashed; I get that. I do not have a problem with people videoing, let us say, an assault, for example, to give to the police to say, 'Hey, here's the mongrel that did this.' I do not have a problem with that, but I do have a really big problem with people videoing stuff like the incident – and I am happy for anyone to correct me on this – down on Beach Road or somewhere where these young blokes were driving in a car and videoed themselves hitting a cyclist, and he went sprawling across

the road, just for social media. I think we should really bring in laws to say: if you video violence for social media content, you will be convicted. There is the law there, but if we had the verification of the social media accounts it would make the policing of that very easy, because they would link it straightaway. It is something I am actually quite passionate about. I cannot wait to see a federal approach to verification of social media accounts to actually stop this side of it.

This bill, with the defamation side of it, is a good step in the right direction, and also with the reporting of family violence and domestic violence. We know those statistics are up as well. I will take on board what the government said – that they have agreed to all 227 recommendations – but it is still up and we are still on the rise, so anything we can do to protect the most vulnerable in our community I will always support. The coalition – and obviously the Shadow Attorney-General stated it earlier – do not oppose this bill. I think it is a good step in the right direction, but I would like to see little bit more done especially around the social media aspect so our youth can feel safe when they come home.

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (11:39): It is a great pleasure to rise today and speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024. Can I first just say a big thankyou to the Attorney-General and her team for all of her work and their work in preparing what is a really crucial bill and what is an important bill that will make some very important reforms. Thank you of course to all of the stakeholders who were part of the lengthy consultation and all of the detail that went into this bill, which is really important when we are making amendments around our criminal justice system and a range of matters which are discussed in this bill. Can I also say a big thanks to the department and to the minister's office. It has been really great to listen to some of the speakers that I have just been listening to in this place. The member for Wendouree spoke very eloquently about the detail of this bill and why it is a critical piece of legislation.

Steve Dimopoulos interjected.

Jackson TAYLOR: Probably more eloquent than me, Minister, I have no doubt. But it is wonderful that you are here listening. I am not sure if it is by choice, but either way.

It was also great to hear the member for Hastings' contribution – very thoughtful and considered, as always. I never expect any less. I did tune in to the member for Malvern's contribution from my office earlier, and it was a very decent contribution on his part as well. I do not usually touch on the contributions of members of the opposition, but I will say that having had a little baby recently and hearing the member for Narracan and talking about some of the conversations that are occurring now around social media and some of the harm that can be caused, it does worry me – having a seven-year-old and the world he will grow up in on social media. So it is important to keep having those conversations. I appreciate the member for Narracan talking about that. Obviously he is very passionate about it.

It is really great to be part of the Allan Labor government. We are constantly looking at ways that we can reform and improve the justice system to ensure it reflects the community's expectations. We have a number of justice legislation amendment bills on police and other matters which we continually bring into this place to do exactly that – to make sure we have a modern justice system that updates over time. In 2024, in the 21st century, with people's expectations of what is expected and how technology relates to the justice system, it is important to keep bringing this type of legislation to the house. It also makes sure that we support victim-survivors. It is critically important that we continue to do that and look at ways to reform the system. I know that there is always more work to do in that space, and I am really proud to be part to a government that is doing that really important work and, as we know, making sure we give our police and our emergency services the powers and the tools that they need to keep people safe.

I can understand members wanting to talk on behalf of their communities and raise issues and advocate and all these sorts of things, but one thing I will never do in this place is try and divide. I will never try and scare or fearmonger. For me it is about talking my community up, advocating within government

and making sure we are giving the police the tools and powers that they need. I hope the conversation can remain that way in this place today – that we are talking about this legislation, talking our communities up and supporting them, not trying to scare and divide, like some have in the past and some may do in this debate.

I know that this Allan Labor government has a very proud and strong track record when it comes to supporting our police and making our communities safe, whether it is the record investment into police – billions of dollars, with thousands more police officers on the streets, keeping our communities safe. We are investing not just in their numbers but in their resources and the police academy, where I had the great privilege of being back in 2013. Was it 2013? It was 2013 – it feels like a lifetime ago now. Every time I go back there is always new investment and new training. The family violence training centre – that is probably not the exact wording for it – that is now there is absolutely state of the art, making sure we are giving our new constables and new recruits the tools and the training they need to be able to get out there and respond from day one. I know they go out in their first placements in their third month and then in subsequent months of their training at the academy. Then of course after graduating from the academy, we are making sure they have the skills and tools to support victims of family violence.

When we talk about the training and we talk about the tools, one of the things that is covered in this bill is of course making sure that police are able to take evidence via body-worn cameras and present it in court. That is now going to be a fixed thing, which is crucially important. I just missed the body-worn cameras coming in, but I know from talking to police officers, to the frontline members who are out there, it has been a fantastic tool in making sure victims are able to tell their story; although, to be quite frank, when I went to family violence incidents 99 per cent of the time I took a statement at the time. But the power of hearing someone's story on a body-worn camera is a great thing. It is an important tool, and it is something that I know that victims have valued and has aided in the prosecution of people in the criminal justice system, making sure that their stories are correctly captured and provided in evidence. That is something that I am really proud that this bill is doing. Capturing body-worn camera evidence for family violence offences is really a critically important tool.

Of course I talked about the police numbers. We also know that we have now rolled out tasers across the state. This is critically important. I remember when I was there, we were going through trials and the regions were getting access to them, but that has now been rolled out across the state. It is an important tool for police officers to keep them safe, to keep the community safe but also to keep offenders safe. It is something that I know has been welcomed by the Police Association Victoria and by police members and another thing that this government has done to give our police the tools and powers that they need.

When we talk about family violence, a really important step this government took was making sure Victoria Police could make permanent family violence detective positions. Now there are so many family violence detectives in those positions permanently – properly recognised – and I know they are doing an incredible job. I know people that I used to work with who are detectives in the prevention of family violence space. It is incredibly challenging work, but it is indeed very, very rewarding. I was very pleased to see that and of course more prosecutors as well. That was something that the government obviously delivered in the last term as well – more prosecutors – making sure the criminal justice system can function as efficiently as possible.

Mathew Hilakari interjected.

Jackson TAYLOR: What is that, member for Point Cook? An extension of time? No, I have 2 minutes left. Thank you, member for Point Cook. We have provided new digital technology – new iPads, new phones – making sure police have the resources when they are out on the streets to be able to communicate effectively, whether that is with D24 – the central police communications centre, for those of you who do not know what D24 is –

Mathew Hilakari: So much better than what you had.

Jackson TAYLOR: It is. I used to have what was called an MDT, mobile data terminal, a clunky thing connected to a keyboard. The driver used to tell the passenger ‘bumps’ when they were going over speed humps so they did not type anything in incorrectly. I would have loved the phones and the iPads, make no mistake about that, but that is something that is supporting our police officers to do their important work.

I also want to say a big thankyou to police out in my community. Indeed all Victorian police officers do a wonderful job. They did an incredible job during COVID, a very difficult job. They deserve every ounce of our respect and thanks when we see them out there. Thanks to the Knox police station, the Boronia police station and of course all the police force across the Knox area. They do an incredible job. It was wonderful to catch up with Inspector Pam Hawker and Senior Sergeant Ben Oakley from Boronia police station recently to talk about some of the trends we are seeing and to talk about some of the important work they are doing not just in the reactive space but also in the prevention space, working with communities. I know they recently held a community safety forum which was extremely well attended. It was an opportunity for people in the Knox area to hear from police about the work they are doing and to build awareness about how they can look after themselves and how they can be a part of helping your community to stay safe. I commend this bill to the house, and I thank our wonderful frontline police for doing the work they do.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (11:49): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

I do so because here in Victoria we have come to a crisis with our crime statistics. Today the crime statistics have been released across our state, and we have seen a 10 per cent increase across the state in all crimes. That is something that is putting more and more victims at risk across the whole of Victoria. We know that we need to see a debate in this place around the crime statistics, and we have already put on the notice paper six or seven notices to ensure that we have got something here to debate. Those debates include moving that the house notes that crime rates in Victoria continue to increase and there is a continuous move to violent crime.

Violent crime in Victoria is so out of control under Labor that this year alone we have seen an 18.4 per cent increase in aggravated burglaries. This is where someone is breaking into a person’s home, generally with a weapon, and terrorising them in their own house. This government is doing nothing about it. We had a report into youth justice in 2017 that has collected dust until such time as two days before we had the crime stats come out highlighting a 20 per cent increase in youth crime. That is a 20 per cent increase – extra. We have had a 25 per cent increase plus since 2018. Why? Because this government has done nothing when it comes to dealing with the crime crisis here in Victoria.

It is not hard: if you reduce police numbers and you close police stations, you will increase crime. That is the thing that is absolutely guaranteed. It is not hard to work that out. In Victoria we have got 43 stations that are temporarily closed or unavailable to the public because this government do not give the police the resources they need. The Labor government promised they would deliver 502 extra police here in our state. At the time they announced that there were 16,159 frontline police. To achieve that they would have to go to 16,661 police. But, you know what, they are at 15,842. That is 317 less police to respond to incidents here in our state, so it is no wonder youth crime is up. It is no wonder that during a cost-of-living crisis theft from shops has increased, and we do not have the police to solve it. But it has got so bad. I have met with shop owners down in Geelong, and they have said they do not even report any crime under \$100 anymore, because it is not worth the time for them and they do not get the police response they need, because they do not have the resources down there. Yet there was still a 34 per cent increase in shop stealing across our state. This is all impacting all victims, who deserve that protection across our state, and again we have got a government that is doing nothing.

We have theft of motor vehicles up 23 per cent and theft from motor vehicles up 18.6 per cent, and the scariest part of all this is that more than 40 per cent of crimes in the state are not being solved. So for every crime that does not get solved, you have got an offender who thinks they can get away with it and will continue to commit those crimes. Worse are those that are getting caught, particularly our young violent offenders in this state who commit the armed hold-ups in retail stores, which we saw just recently in Bayside, where victims were terrorised at work. They need protection. Teens were terrorised with people with knives coming into their stores. What the government are not telling you is that these kids were on bail. They had already committed violent offences. Ash Gordon died in this state because this government failed to fix the bail system and keep a violent offender locked up. Let me assure you it is going to happen again.

That is why the opposition today are moving this adjournment, because this should be and must be the absolute priority in this state. Crime is out of control. The growth corridors are seeing more crimes than they have ever seen in the past. In areas like Cardinia it is up 13 per cent. In Mildura it is up 10 per cent. It does not matter where you go, crime continues to increase, and the government's answer to this is to bring out a document that does nothing to address the crisis we have in youth crime in this state.

The biggest challenge we have is the minister is so useless he actually cannot go out and say we have a crime crisis and youth crime issue here in Victoria. The youth justice system that he oversees is effectively run by the 14- to 18-year-olds who are inside that system, because this government will not give it the resources it needs. They have cut funding when it comes to crime prevention here in our state, and until they reverse these issues, until they reverse that funding cut, until they start to listen to the experts out there and we take the worst criminals off our streets, nothing will change. Crime will increase and people will be less safe under Labor.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (11:54): I rise to oppose the member for Berwick's motion, and I hope that we can get back swiftly to government business. In talking about the words of the member for Berwick in bringing the motion, I would rebut them pretty simply by saying that, as Tony Blair and Alastair Campbell put it, this is a government that is tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. The member for Berwick talked about some of the multifaceted dimensions that lead to higher incidence of crime, and they are complex and myriad. That is why the fantastic Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Corrections, the Minister for Police, the Premier and others have spoken to the media this week about this government's landmark reforms to improve the system of youth justice, to ensure that we have earlier intervention that wraps around young people who are at risk and to lower the incidence of crime – of violent crime and of crime that has an impact upon our communities.

There is both the need to intercede early to reduce the incidence of crime, which the bills that have been talked about and will be introduced and debated in this place will do, but also then the need to respond where crime does occur, much as the fantastic Victoria Police in my community at Broadmeadows and Craigieburn do every day. I am very fortunate to have a good relationship with the police in my area. They have been incredibly responsive to concerns that I have raised on behalf of the community and that I know community members raise with them on a daily basis.

The incidence of crime is not necessarily driven by any single factor, but the police are there irrespective of that every single day working hard to keep our community safe, both in Greenvale but also I know across Victoria. The Minister for Police – the outstanding Minister for Police – has spoken with me recently about the double intakes that the Victoria Police Academy have had out in, I believe, the member for Glen Waverley's electorate. It is rolling through constantly, ensuring that we have a new cohort of police coming into service on a very regular basis filling vacancies across the state, working in rural and indeed metropolitan areas of our state. As I said, there is a need to intervene early to ensure that young people who are at risk of getting into a spiral of crime are supported, are intervened with, if that is the correct way of putting it, to make sure that there is really effective early intervention that keeps communities safer, that those who are perpetrating crime are dealt with by the justice system so that they are not able to further threaten the community but also so that those who

are at risk of getting into that spiral are intervened with much earlier in a much more effective way so that communities can be kept safer.

I do note on the government business program that if indeed we were to take the member for Berwick's advice and adopt his motion, we would be moving to a nuclear power motion in the next step of the government business program today. The member for Berwick may very well wish to discuss the benefits of nuclear power generation in the Latrobe Valley, or maybe there is a push on to get one in Beaconsfield Upper – I am not entirely sure. But I suggest that the legislation that was being considered by the Parliament just before, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024, which contains very significant provisions around court data and also speaks to some of the need to improve the evidence base around crime, punishment and justice in our state, is a worthy piece of legislation. A number of members from across the chamber, including the member for Narracan and the member for Bayswater, spoke very eloquently about the role that Victoria Police play in their communities responding to crime but also about the way in which Victoria Police proactively work with community to lower the incidence of crime. That I think could have been a useful forum to ventilate some of the issues that the member for Berwick sought to cover in his speech on the motion. I think we should be getting back to the consideration of that bill. I think it is an important bill that many in the Parliament wish to add the voice of their community to before the guillotine comes later on today.

I also think that the work that the Minister for Police and the Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Corrections have done in this space is very worthy. It is important work. It is going to be nation-leading work. It is going to be keeping communities safer. My community wants that work to be done and for this government to continue being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, so I oppose the motion and I hope we can get back to the government business program.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (11:59): We must urgently debate the crime crisis in Victoria, and that is why the member has moved to adjourn debate. We must do it now; we must do it urgently. The time for action is now. The government have spoken today, trying to explain away why this Parliament should not be debating this urgent issue, and they have said, 'Well, the Premier and the minister have talked to the people this week.' So what? The Premier and the minister have done talking – well, frankly, have done nothing – for far too long. And what has happened as a result? We have seen a massive spike in crime over recent years. But in this last year, in the data released today, we have seen a 10 per cent increase across the board and a 20 per cent increase in youth crime. What is the government proposing to do? Nothing. They have brought a bill into this place which does nothing except soften the law further. It is absolutely outrageous. We have seen bail laws softened at a time when we need tougher laws. We need tougher laws on punishments, and we need tougher laws on bail.

In my community in Bayside over the weekend we saw that young teens working in local grocers were attacked by a gang of thugs, one of whom has so far been arrested – only one. These thugs have come in with knives. The profound impact that has had on those workers has been extraordinary, and they should not have to put up with this in their workplace. Why should they? But this is what is happening in the community because the Premier is ignoring these crimes. Do you hear the Premier ever talk about this crime crisis that is happening in Victoria? Absolutely not. All you hear the Premier do is try and talk down the importance of them. Talk about gaslighting victims – how outrageous. Every time you see a crime, a knife crime especially, you hear a minister or the Premier walk out and talk down the crime that has occurred, and it has happened now for years. But we have got to the point where the data that is being released is showing what the community already knows, so the government cannot keep hiding from it. You see it with aggravated burglaries, up 18 per cent this year – up 18 per cent in one year. I know about these crimes because they have happened proportionately more in the Bayside community. They are almost 150 cent up over the life of this government.

Ten years ago home invasion was a concept you did not even know about. Now it is regular in Bayside in many of our streets. In some streets in my community there have been multiple cases over time of home invasion. But it is not just those crimes; there has been a nearly 23 per cent increase in motor vehicle theft and an almost 35 per cent increase in theft from retail. And you hear that from traders. Traders talk about this. That is one in three. I mean, these numbers are huge, and you hear that from traders. You would think the government would actually care about business at a time that business is doing it tough, but of course the government is just ignoring these crimes. We have seen 43 police station closures. Over the last year there has been a 3 per cent reduction in police and over the last two years a 5 per cent reduction in police. How can you allow this, if you are a government, at a time that these crimes are getting more vicious and more violent?

When you talk to the police privately, they are calling it out. On Saturday after these crimes occurring, the police were contacting me and saying, 'Please, please tell this left-wing government to do something about the law, to do something about bail.' And you feel for these hardworking police men and women, because they are trying to look after their community. They are putting themselves at risk for all of us, and they are saying they want action from this government, not a Premier who is ignoring these crimes. That is what this government does – ignores these crimes. It is absolutely outrageous. We must urgently stop debate. We must debate these issues, the issues of this crime crisis in Victoria, because we need action now. We need tougher laws. We need to toughen bail. We need action now.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (12:04): I am rising to say that I am not surprised. We are getting quite used to these sorts of stunts in Parliament, and I wonder if after life in politics the member for Brighton might not get a job as a stuntman.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is an important procedural motion, not an opportunity for the Labor Party to sledge other members. It is an important question before the house, and I would ask the member to be brought back to that procedural question.

The SPEAKER: Member for Yan Yean, this is a procedural debate. I ask you to stick to the procedural debate.

Lauren KATHAGE: Thank you for your guidance, Speaker. The reason that I do not wish to adjourn the current debate is because the bill that we are debating, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024, is important. The reason that this bill is important is because it continues the important work of supporting victim-survivors of family violence to have the appropriate support when they are reporting crimes, and it also enables police to act and support them in those reports in a way that is efficient for the police, because this side of the house will always support police in what they need to do. We know that the work we are doing to reduce the admin burden on police is important. It is important for their job satisfaction and important for them to get through their work. That is why I do not wish to adjourn debate, because I want to talk about the justice legislation amendment bill.

These are important changes that we are bringing in. This is all in line with the work that we have been doing in response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The work around defamation protections in the bill that we want to discuss and we are meant to be debating includes also supporting women who have experienced perhaps sexual harassment or aggression in workplaces and the like so that they are empowered to speak up and to seek justice for bad things happening to them. We are trying to overcome those barriers, and your stunt is simply stopping us or delaying us from giving those added protections and assurances to victim-survivors. To me that is repugnant, because our work of supporting victim-survivors of family violence should not be stopped by men yelling in the chamber who want to have their own way and talk about what they want to talk about. Let us get on with the important work of government of supporting victim-survivors through these policy changes.

As I touched on before, it is important because it is also supporting Victoria Police, who I want to say do a fantastic job, and these changes mean that their work, which we value so greatly, is made easier.

We know that the work that we are doing to ensure that people in our community are safe goes on. I know the member for Berwick made an outrageous claim about crime prevention funding which is simply not true. But again I am not surprised, because those opposite seek stunts, seek headlines. I thank the member for Berwick for his offer of a briefing, but having gone through the budget papers myself and having had the opportunity to question the relevant minister as a member of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, I would be happy to refer the member for Berwick to the transcripts of the PAEC sessions, where it is very clearly set out.

I would ask those opposite not to seek to inflame community concern by this stunt and this faux outrage. I would ask them to allow us to get on with the business of the day, and the business of the day and the business of every day of this government is to provide support for victim-survivors of family violence. It is to provide support to women who have been made voiceless by yelling and aggressive men. We in this chamber will not take it from those opposite, and women in our community should not have to take it either.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:09): I rise to support the call by the member for Berwick, the Shadow Minister for Police, to adjourn this debate to talk about the issue that absolutely matters to each and every Victorian, and that is community safety. There is nothing more important right now than to address the issue of ensuring that Victorians can feel safe in their own home, in their workplace and on the streets, and at every single measure the Allan Labor government is failing to deliver when it comes to community safety – absolutely failing. If you want an example of that, you only have to look at the crime statistics today. That is why we should be debating this today, because the crime statistics show a 10 per cent increase in crime right across the board and a 20 per cent increase in youth crime. This has not happened overnight. This is through a decade of a tired Labor government that has not done the work to keep the community safe. It is appalling to think that this government want to bury their heads in the sand and not deal with reality.

There is no question that each and every member in this Parliament would have had constituents come to them and talk about crime issues. For family violence, dealing with car theft and home invasions, in every single measure there has been a failure. For youth crime the government only now are looking at really touching the edges of the very issues that are activating young people to a life of crime. It is horrific to think you have got people as young as 10 years of age that are being courted into a life of crime. There is no ability to rehabilitate them and no ability to get them off the street. The only focus is to get them graduated to a life of crime – not in a school or in an area where they can actually benefit themselves and the community but unfortunately to a life of crime.

It is an absolute disgrace that this government has done nothing, absolutely nothing, when it comes to that. We know it in a number of the figures that we see: theft of motor vehicles up 23 per cent. I hear it each and every day. It is so bold and brazen to think that whether it be motor vehicles, whether it be people's homes, home invasions, we are seeing these figures increase 20, 30 per cent, up year on year on year on year. What does the government say? 'Well, you know what, we'll just forget about it. We'll talk about something else.' Well, I tell you what, when someone is coming into your house in the middle of the night – I have had my daughter talk about this because she has many friends who have experienced this. Imagine a 20-year-old young person having to deal with someone coming into their home in the middle of the night while they are sleeping and ransack their home and threaten them and their safety. That is a failure. That is an absolute failure.

I hear the government talk up Victoria Police, and no-one will talk up Victoria Police more than our Shadow Minister for Police, who is a former member of Victoria Police. He knows what it is like, and we know what it is like because we talk to Victoria Police. Georgie Crozier, a member for Southern Metropolitan, and I have visited a number of stations in the last few weeks in our electorate to talk to frontline Victoria Police, and do you know what they tell us? They tell us they are exhausted. They are exhausted because they are under-resourced; they do not have enough staff. People say that you can do a double shift. They do not want to do double shifts. They do not want more money. They just want to rest, but because they do not have enough police, they are forced to get out there and do this

every single day. They are absolutely exhausted. If you look at what has been happening locally in terms of some of these protests, these police have to babysit these protesters each and every day.

The government has failed in providing more police and the government has failed in providing more police powers, and ultimately this has kept our frontline police vulnerable. It has made them vulnerable. You have an exhausted police officer having to go out on the beat because they do not have enough staff; you have a police officer that does not have enough powers to do things, so they have to nurse people because this government has watered down their powers each and every time. Police are literally doing their job with one arm tied behind their back. Enough is enough. Give police the powers, give police the resources and give police the support. Do not just talk about this. This is a complete failure of an Allan Labor government that has done nothing. Statistics talk; the numbers talk today. It is an absolute failure. It is a disgrace that our Victorian community cannot feel safe because this government has failed to provide police with the resources and the powers to do their job.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (12:14): I do note the adjournment debate that the member for Berwick has brought on, and I guess the thing that I note about the opposition is that they have got a lot of stunts to do every week. We expect these stunts just to roll through week by week, but –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a procedural debate, not a sledge motion.

The SPEAKER: Member for Point Cook, I ask you to speak to the motion before the house.

Mathew HILAKARI: Of course. There is an adjournment motion in front of us, and it is important that we do have this debate at this point in time. There is some relevance with where we might go next, but I might come back to that in a moment. Just to finish the point there, there is a set procedure in this house that occurs all the time from the opposition, but the only thing that they have got more of than stunts is new candidates for Leader of the Opposition. We have heard from the member for Berwick, the member for Brighton and the member for Caulfield. I did not realise you were putting your hand up as well; it is great to see. I see the member for Bulleen enter the chamber. I will get back to the importance of why we should –

Members interjecting.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is an insult to the victims, and I would ask you to bring the member back to the important motion that is before the house.

The SPEAKER: Member for Point Cook, this is a procedural debate. I ask you to stick to the procedural debate.

Mathew HILAKARI: I see that we get to these adjournment debates often, because I think there is probably not a lot left to say from those in the opposition. What we are talking about is an important bill. An important bill is in front of us at the moment in the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024, and it goes to the matters of court data and improving the accessibility to the evidence in court proceedings – and around defamation law. It always does make the opposition a little bit nervous when we start to talk about defamation law. It raises the temperature just that little bit for everybody there. Defamation is a little bit of a touchy word, I see, for those opposite. We do have important matters that we do want to discuss in this place, but it is not for lack of having more matters on the agenda. I do go to the next item of business in the orders of the day, which is about nuclear power. I am glad to see that the opposition is in a rush to talk more about nuclear power in this place, because it is in an interesting debate that the Nationals leader has brought up. When I have invited those members opposite –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the member has now twice defied your ruling.

The SPEAKER: Member for Point Cook, come back to the motion before the house.

Mathew HILAKARI: Of course. I do enjoy talking about the adjourning of this debate and what we might be thinking about next in terms of the debate, and that is of course nuclear power, which is

on the notice paper. That is why I just think that maybe this is a good point in time that the member for Berwick has brought up that maybe it is something that we should be adjourning, and maybe we should be thinking about that next set of debates. The nuclear power plant that is proposed by the Leader of the Opposition federally in –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, three times you have advised the member to return to the question as to whether or not the house adjourn – the issue being debated. The member is not doing that, defying your ruling repeatedly.

The SPEAKER: Member for Point Cook, I remind you again this is a procedural debate.

Mathew HILAKARI: We do have a lot to say on this bill, even if those opposite do not, but we do have a lot to say on the next order of business as well. I might finish up my words there, and I look forward to –

Members interjecting.

Mathew HILAKARI: I am happy to talk about the seismic activity down in the Loy Yang area and the earthquakes that we are going to experience where we put the nuclear power plant. I look forward to you threading that needle. But having said that, I look –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, 12,000 victims in the last year in the member's electorate –

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until later this day.

Motions

Nuclear energy

Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:

That this house:

- (1) condemns the federal opposition's plan to send energy bills sky-high with dangerous and expensive nuclear power;
- (2) calls on the leader and deputy leader of the Victorian opposition to rule out nuclear reactors on the Great Ocean Road or in any Victorian community.

And James Newbury's amendment:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted and replaced with the words 'the Allan Labor government be condemned for failing to provide secure, reliable and affordable energy to Victorians.'

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:22): I move:

That debate be adjourned.

I move that debate be adjourned because this is just another attempt by this government to deflect away from the important issue of the day. That is what we on this side of the house know.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: I will remove members from the chamber. The member for Brighton has the call. Member for Brighton, you have a microphone. There is no need to yell.

James NEWBURY: I am not yelling. I am using my voice, which I am entitled to do. After the coalition attempted to adjourn debate on the previous bill, the government have moved to one of their sledge motions – of course they have. Twice they have avoided the issue of the day, the most important issue to Victorians, and that is the crime crisis in this state. That is how desperate this government is. They have moved sneakily to a debate about nuclear. That is what they have done. It is absolutely

outrageous. They have been caught, and that is why I have moved that the debate be adjourned from their sneaky sledge motion. We will not allow them to use their tactics in this chamber, their numbers in this chamber, to try and deflect again from the important issue of today, and the important issue of today is the crime crisis in Victoria.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Narre Warren North withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: Member for Frankston, were you on your feet for a point of order?

Paul Edbrooke: No, Speaker. I was just going to go to the men's.

James NEWBURY: I do not think we need permission for that, but what we do need this house to agree on is that this government stop denying crime. That is what this house must agree on. We must agree that the government stop hiding from crime and stop ignoring crime, and when you look at the crimes that are occurring in our community, we must adjourn debate.

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Speaker – thank you for your advice earlier – this is a tight procedural debate, and I ask you to bring the member to order.

The SPEAKER: I think the member for Brighton was on the procedural motion.

James NEWBURY: Thank you for the try. It is outrageous to think that the government has used the sneaky tactics of this chamber to try and twice stop a debate on crime. We have caught them, so we will be having a debate on crime. When you look at the crime statistics in these members' electorates, they are going up. We saw the horrific incidents of crime in my community on the weekend, when young girls were working in my local grocers. Three young staff in one of my local grocers were attacked by these men with knives. It was outrageous. What did we hear from the government after those crimes occurred? The government talked them down. How outrageous. What gaslighting. These poor kids in one of my local stores who were working hard. That is the type of stuff that the community expects us to be talking about, because my community wants tougher laws when it comes to punishment.

My community wants tougher bail laws, and the only way we will see that is if the Parliament adjourns these silly little sledge motions and talks about issues important to Victorians: a 10 per cent increase in crime, a 20 per cent increase in youth crime, a nearly 20 per cent increase in aggravated burglaries. Do you think it is okay that the government has shut 43 police stations, including Bayside? Bayside station is shut at night, and now when people go to the Bayside station from 5 o'clock at night there is a sign on the door saying that it is shut. It is not good enough. That is why this Parliament must debate this urgent issue immediately. We move fiercely for the Parliament to be provided time to find solutions to these important issues to Victorians. We cannot allow the victims to not have their voice, and that is why the coalition is moving to have this debate now.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (12:27): Wasn't that a spirited defence of what was a bit of a faux pas from those opposite. I do not know what the consequence will be for not reading the notice paper and the orders of the day, but goodness me they are in trouble, aren't they. The member for Brighton led a spirited defence of why we supported the adjournment and the move on to something like the nuclear power motion. This is a really important thing because we know that government business takes precedence over general business, and so anyone who fronted up here today knew that first on the list of government business – and I am reading this out because it is important and no-one has read it on the other side – the subordinate legislation was up. We were on the justice legislation amendment bill, and then anyone who was worth their weight as a member of Parliament would see that nuclear power was third on the list. If I could bottle the looks of confusion on the faces of the

member for Berwick and the member for Brighton, we would not need any more stand-up routines. The sheer terror about what is going on: 'Hang on, they've agreed to something that we've put forward.'

This is an issue of our time and a generational issue. The nuclear power matter now, after the leader of the federal opposition, cannot be more important. In fact I think this should be a focus and that every single member of Parliament in this place should be on the record. I think this motion needs to be debated from here to Gippsland and back again because we need to have every member of this place on the record as to whether they support the nuclear announcement of the federal opposition, as to whether the Leader of the Opposition will stand up to this and stand up to the policy, and as to what the members for Gippsland South and Morwell think of nuclear energy coming to their communities and the by-product waste that has no plan and no storage. This motion is a motion of our time. It is one of the biggest moments in our state's Parliament, and we need every member of Parliament and every political party to sign up to a memorandum opposing nuclear power in our state. Every member of Parliament needs to debate this. If there was ever an important motion to put forward for the security of this state and for our time, this nuclear motion is it.

I am going to give the member for Brighton and the member for Berwick a bit of credit here: I actually think they knew this. I do not think they are so slack that they would not have read the orders of the day. I have seen them do leadership challenges where they could not count to 16 as a majority number, but I think they have improved a bit over time. I cannot think that they are so careless that they would not have known the next thing. I will let you in on an even bigger secret. I think the member for Brighton knew this was on the list, because we have seen him try to take on some of the hard right in his party and stand up for climate action. Everyone saw him at Footy for Climate. He could not be any more of a lover of climate action. He was so strong on climate action he took the spot of the minister who was on it. He said, 'No, no, as the opposition speaker I've got this first up. Minister Dimopoulos, step aside. I've got this one covered.' At least he showed a position and a bit of leadership, not 'We don't have any plans. I haven't had a call from the chief of staff to opposition leader Dutton yet to tell me what I should think and feel.' We know the member for Berwick is in a bit of a conflict with that because Jason Wood, the federal member out his way, is a very strong environmentalist. The member for Berwick gets on that as well. What is the member for Berwick's view on storage of waste in our south-eastern suburbs? What does the member for Berwick think on the management of toxic nuclear by-products and waste?

What will they say? As potential leadership contenders they need to all be on the record, so this motion goes deeper than anything before. Maybe a few weeks ago when federal opposition leader Dutton did not have a clue what he was doing it was not of such importance, but this is the biggest moment of our time. What does every member of Parliament on that side think of nuclear waste in their communities? Will they front up and offer to store it? Will they offer to store the waste in their communities? What will they do? The member for Bulleen – you know you are in a bit of strife when the chap who has had two goes is still the best answer – has been on the record as being very concerned about nuclear waste in the past, so he might be the answer to the lack of leadership from the Leader of the Opposition. We will be doing a stocktake on every member of Parliament. You know what our position is on this side: we do not support nuclear energy in our state. We do not support it in our state. We have got a better pathway forward, and I ask those opposite who support this motion to step up on behalf of their communities and tell us their views.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (12:33): The reason we have moved this adjournment again is because we have got a government that wants to go back to a simple sledge motion rather than talk about the victims in our state. I will go on record every single time and say one of the priorities of this opposition, which should be the priority of this government, is the mounting number of victims across Victoria. It is not just the victims who were in the store in Bayside or who were hit by a car in Berwick with a car that was stolen, and it is not the victims whose homes were invaded; it is the continuous extensions of those with their families. It is those that are absolutely genuinely worried about what is going to happen in their home when they see that aggravated burglaries have gone up by 146 per cent under Labor.

I know that the member for Mordialloc was talking about diversions and trying to get tactics across. Maybe the member for Mordialloc could put a notice on the paper to talk about John Setka in his role to correct men's health. If you want to fix men's health, go and put one on the notice paper and put your position forward on what you think about John Setka, and we will talk about crime that is happening across the south-east or the behaviour of those men there. We need to fix youth crime here in our state. We must fix crime across the state. We cannot continue to see –

Pauline Richards: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a tight procedural motion, and I would ask you to bring the member back to the motion before us.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the member was back at the time and should continue.

Brad BATTIN: We are saying that the most important reason why we want this adjournment is because of the crime statistics and victims across our state. I know Labor want to cut me off, and the reason Labor want to cut me off is because members like the member for Point Cook, who wanted to stand up and laugh at crime here in Victoria, would like to send that out to 12,000 victims across Wyndham – 12,000 victims in the last 12 months who have been victims of crime in Wyndham alone. And they think that is a laughing matter. We have got issues all the way across the state, and I think it is important when we are talking about why it is important that we debate it in here.

I have spoken to a victim who was not in the house when his house was broken into. He was in Perth, and whilst in Perth he got a phone call from his daughter and his daughter said, 'Dad, there's someone in the house.' There were three offenders. I could not even imagine what it would be like to be in a different state when your child rings and says, 'There are three offenders with weapons in the house right now.' And we cannot get in contact with police. We have had issues with 000 here in this state under this government, and we know in Mildura we have also got police vacancies, which is leading to an increase in crime. We have continuously said we must have debates in this place about protecting our community.

I spoke about the numbers of Victoria Police before, and I know the government want to talk about the EBA decision for the 9 hours and nine-day fortnight in 2027: 'Not now – we're putting that off till after the next election. We're not doing it before the election; we're going to do it after.' But what they will not speak about is the fact that we have 317 less police officers in Victoria today than we did two years ago, after the government promised an increase of 502. That is 317 less people in the van to respond to emergencies across our state. That is 317 less police that should be driving around proactively to stop and prevent crime. And what happens when we do not have this? We have an increase in our aggravated burglaries to such a state that people are genuinely fearful wherever they live across the entire state of Victoria.

I can tell you in Berwick we were rated number 2 for aggravated burglaries. Crime in Clyde North, where the government promised a police station and failed to deliver it, has increased. I will note the member for Bass just sort of going, 'Who cares?' The reality is there was an increase in crime of 27 per cent in Clyde North. We will explain that to your electorate as well. They are not getting the response they deserve, because Labor failed to deliver the police station they promised. Even if they could deliver it, they could not deliver the police officers for it, because they cannot get new police in there.

There is nothing more important that we need to debate right now here in Victoria than crime and youth crime. We need to get that crime under control. We need to make sure that we get those that we are scared of off the street and not continue to bail them to go out there and terrorise people in their homes, their workplaces or the street. The only way that can happen is if this government gets off its arse and starts to do what we need to do to fix Victoria.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (12:38): I too rise to speak on this procedural motion. We will not be supporting an adjournment of the debate. I just want to point out the irony of the two adjournment motions that have occurred today. I have been in the chamber for the entire debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024. Each of the opposition

speakers that got up, of whom I think there were three – the Shadow Attorney-General, then the member for Kew and then the member for Narracan – took the opportunity to talk about the changes to the Crime Statistics Act 2014 that are in that piece of legislation, and all of them used that opportunity in a very mature and reserved way to talk about what that impact was going to be.

We have heard the member for Berwick use his 5-minute contribution in the first adjournment motion and now his second 5-minute contribution in the second adjournment motion to effectively prosecute the same arguments. There was an opportunity for all of the speakers in the opposition who wished to do so to continue to debate the justice legislation bill and talk about crime statistics or whichever element they wished to talk about, but no, the opposition chose instead to adjourn debate, which under the procedures of the house means that debate is going to move to the next item on government business, which of course is the nuclear power motion.

If the members of the opposition wanted the opportunity to debate issues of crime and justice, they had that opportunity. They were the ones who wanted to move this adjournment motion. That was 40 minutes ago. We could have had another two speakers on each side and gone through to lunchtime or whenever to actually debate those issues. But that is not the approach that the opposition wants. The opposition has called on this adjournment motion, and now it has moved onto the next order of the day, which is the nuclear motion. I think as the member for Mordialloc said, it is a really appropriate time to have this motion debated. I know this motion had been in place previously, but given the events of yesterday and given that the federal Leader of the Opposition has now come out and announced the seven sites across the country where he would like to see nuclear power – now, obviously we have not been given any costs of that or any detail about how that is going to change power prices or how you are going to transport any of the material or any of those details yet; they are all to come – it is absolutely pertinent that a motion such as this gets brought on in the house today so that we can have that debate and learn more detail about what each member of the opposition actually thinks about Peter Dutton's nuclear plan for Victoria and how they are going to be engaging with their communities about overturning the nuclear-free zone that we have had for more than 40 years, because that is what it is going to require if we are to have nuclear power in Victoria.

This is an important debate that we do need to bring on, and I want to thank the opposition for moving the adjournment at this point in time so that we can bring this debate on. We should be confronting these issues head-on, and I think actually it has given us the opportunity to even put some additional speakers on this nuclear motion. So I really think that it is a terrific initiative from the opposition to bring this debate on. I do want to see this debate coming on fairly soon, so I will leave my contribution there.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:42): I cannot think of anything more important to talk about than the crime crisis that this government has created in this state. This government have done absolutely nothing in 10 years – 10 years of sitting on their backsides and doing absolutely nothing – and now Victorians are feeling unsafe. This government, these members, can smile and joke and carry on, but they are not representing their constituents, who are not feeling safe in their electorates. I cannot think of anything more important to talk about than community safety; there is nothing more important to talk about than community safety.

Members interjecting.

David SOUTHWICK: You can carry on, but what about your constituents? You have let them down; you have failed them. The member for Box Hill got up and said we should be talking about all kinds of other things. Why isn't the member for Box Hill standing up for his constituency – an 18 per cent increase in crime? You should be up and about in Box Hill; you should be up and about, fighting for your constituents in Box Hill.

Tim Richardson: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a tight procedural debate, and I am just wondering if they can actually say ‘nuclear’. Because they cannot say ‘the motion’, they need to say ‘nuclear’ as the motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Points of order are not an opportunity for debate. The member for Caulfield to continue on the procedural motion, please.

David SOUTHWICK: This government have their heads in the sand. The member for Mordialloc has the City of Kingston in his electorate. They have crime up 17 per cent. Why isn’t he talking up his constituents? Why isn’t he fighting for his constituents? They have failed, and on the flip side of that: no funding, no resources, no power. Police are struggling to do their jobs because this government has failed. We have a number – 40 per cent – of crimes that are unsolved here in this state. That means if people go to their local police station, if it has not already been closed, and report something – if they can take a statement from you, because they are under-resourced – only 60 per cent will actually be resolved. Forty per cent will go in the too-hard basket because police do not have the resources. They are exhausted, they are tired, they are under-resourced and they do not have the police powers to do their job, and this government is failing them.

There is nothing more important for this government to be doing right now. Everyone should feel safe in their communities. Everyone should feel safe in their workplace. A federal colleague, Josh Burns in Macnamara, had his office torched yesterday. There should be a focus on dealing with that; there should be a focus on getting to the bottom of that. What are we doing with that? In our workplaces we have crimes being committed on our building sites on the Big Build. We have seen ghost shifting. We have seen wages being put in with fake bills. We have seen Indigenous labour hire firms being kicked off worksites. And who has been doing that? John Setka and the CFMEU. Police could be investigating that if they had enough powers. Where is the government on that? There is silence. We had yesterday a whole lot of questions being asked about John Setka and his illegal bullying and intimidation in workplaces, and not one minister would mention John Setka’s name. This government is running a protection racket on the CFMEU and John Setka. This government is not funding police to do their job. Victoria Police are not able to keep the community safe, because they do not have the resources, they do not have the funding and they do not have the powers.

This government can pull stunts every single day; they can talk about everything every single day, and the only thing nuclear at the moment is your government. That is the only thing nuclear – your government. This government is blowing up. This government is completely blowing up, and it is because this government will not keep communities safe. They will not listen to their constituents. They are ignoring them, completely ignoring them. I tell you what, we should look at every one of those constituents and every one of those crime stats in every one of those electorates from the Labor Party today, because crime is up 10 per cent across the state – 20 per cent for youth crime. We see it, we hear it, we are responding to it and we want to do something about it, but this government has had 10 years to act. It is a tired, lazy Labor government that has failed to keep the community safe.

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (12:47): I do not support the opposition’s motion, but I absolutely support talking about the federal opposition leader’s pledge to put nuclear reactors right across this country. It is an absolute disgrace. I must say I love the opposition. They try to adjourn debate, but we were already having the conversation in the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024, except it was a little bit less shouty. They were saying the same stuff, but they just were not yelling. I kid you not, it was almost the exact same content. They should have stayed on the bill. They were saying the same things, just three octaves lower. I just do not get it.

What we need to be talking about is all the questions that the federal opposition leader Peter Dutton is not answering around his disgraceful plan to put nuclear reactors right around this country – absolutely a shame. He is dodging questions, dodging detail at every single turn. Could you imagine if this was a federal Labor government? Could you imagine if this was a Labor Premier, a Labor government doing what the federal opposition leader is doing right at this very moment? Of course he said the

costs would be released in due course, but he did not commit to it before the election. I figure 'in due course' was much like those opposite trying to figure out the notice papers. They will figure them out in due course and how that all works. Like I said, they should have stayed on the bill.

I love how those opposite are saying, 'We won't shy away.' We were literally talking about that bill, and I tell you what, this government is never going to shy away from our support of police, our support to back them in each and every single day. I can tell you now, as a former police officer myself, seeing the support when I was in there, when this government came into power in 2014 – the support, the tools, the resources, the laws we have changed to make sure they have got the powers and the tools to keep Victorian safe and to support our communities – this government will never shy away from talking about those important issues. If those members wanted to stay three octaves higher, they should have stayed on the bill. It is the exact same content.

I tell you what, there is lots of dodging over there on nuclear. The member for Caulfield said the member for Box Hill wants to talk about all other types of things. You have got to be kidding me. The member for Box Hill was talking about nuclear, not all other types of things. Come on, seriously. We are in this place; let us get serious. The member for Box Hill was absolutely talking about something that we all need to talk about. What do we want to talk about? There is no dodging over here. I can tell you there is no dodging on where I stand on this. If nuclear reactors are not good enough for Bayswater, they are not good enough for anywhere in this country, certainly when there is absolutely no detail on it. I would simply ask members: do you want nuclear reactors? Do members opposite want nuclear reactors in their electorates? Member for Berwick, a nuclear reactor? Member for Rowville, member for Narracan and member for Hawthorn, a nuclear reactor? If you want to talk about all types of things here, what we want to talk about is a serious issue about the federal opposition leader with his – I cannot even call them half-baked plans. I do not know how baked they are, but they are certainly not baked, I tell you right now. There is no dodging on this side.

I tell you what our side absolutely will never stand for is more delay, more climate wars. That is the last thing that this country needs. We saw 10 years of that, propagated by the Liberals and Nationals and by the Greens party, who voted down an emissions trading scheme in federal Parliament – a shameful chapter in our country's history. We are so far behind the eight ball. Nuclear energy is the most expensive form of energy. It is not me that says that, it is experts out there. The CSIRO have come out and they have already talked about the issues that exist, that are inherent, with nuclear energy and the fact that we will not even see it come on line for more than a decade. We have got the cheapest forms of energy. We have got wind and we have got solar – the cheapest forms of energy, which this government is already rolling out in record numbers. We are ahead of the curve. We are not just nation leading, we are world leading.

I say again to those opposite: figure out the notice paper. Instead of going, 'Oh, no, it's a stunt,' seriously, figure out the notice paper. Let us talk about the federal opposition leader's disgraceful tactics and let us talk about making sure that we do not see nuclear reactors and nuclear waste littered over this beautiful country and landscape.

Assembly divided on James Newbury's motion:

Ayes (25): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Noes (49): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve

McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Motion defeated.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (12:58): We know the Liberals cannot read a government business program. How are they supposed to run a nuclear reactor? Unbelievable. I must declare that my parents live in Morwell. Last night they rang me up, and they said, 'Paul, our dearest son, we love you. We're a little bit confused, though. When did we get asked if we wanted a bloody nuclear reactor in our backyard? Are these people ready to take the nuclear reactor in their own backyard? Will it be the Brighton sea baths power station? Will it be the Mornington nuclear power station? Where will the waste go?' Mum and Dad are generally very, very conservative. I would say the community on Facebook pages in Morwell right now is going nuts. You should have a read. You should do some polling down there.

Sitting suspended 1:00 pm until 2:01 pm.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge in the gallery the Italian Consul General Ms Hanna Pappalardo. It is her last day today. I also acknowledge in the gallery Senator Raff Ciccone.

Members

Minister for Employment

Absence

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I rise to inform the house that for the purposes of question time today the Minister for Jobs and Industry will answer questions for the portfolios of employment and prevention of family violence.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Community safety

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Premier. It was revealed earlier today that all crime has gone up by more than 10 per cent across Victoria. Why has it become more dangerous to live in Victoria under a Labor government?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:03): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The Leader of the Opposition raised a question regarding the crime statistics that were released this morning. I note from the release of the crime statistics from the independent Crime Statistics Agency that they go through a range of matters that are occurring across the state and particularly make observations in terms of, yes, some of the challenges that are presented but also in terms of how the stats demonstrate that the true crime rate remains 6.2 per cent below the rate before the pandemic. This is important to note. The question from the Leader of the Opposition went to observations about what is happening under a Labor government. I can tell you about what is happening under this Labor government. We have invested \$4.5 billion in Victoria Police.

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: I note the Leader of the Opposition is having a crack at Victoria Police by saying that investment is not working.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Members will be removed without warning today.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question and needs to stop talking down crime.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: There is the investment of \$4.5 billion in Victoria Police. I understand the Leader of the Opposition struggles to understand how that investment is about supporting community safety, because when the Liberal Party were in government they failed to fund one single additional police officer.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The level of noise is unacceptable. Members will be removed without warning.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is continuing to debate the question.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: I reference our investment in Victoria Police in contrast with the failure of the former government to invest in Victoria Police because this investment has resulted in an additional 3600 police in Victoria Police, and as I said yesterday, there are more coming through the academy. This is important in terms of when we have a conversation about community safety. We need to invest in Victoria Police, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: What we also know we need to do is provide police with the tools and resources that they need to tackle the challenges that do exist with crime rates across the state. That is why this week in introducing the new youth justice reform – and I am conscious that it is sitting on the notice paper, so I will not anticipate debate – I note that on Tuesday when I was asked about these matters I referred to that bill as giving police more tools, particularly to tackle some of the challenges that we know we have around youth crime. Indeed Victoria Police’s media statement today identifies this itself. That is why we are investing in Victoria Police but also driving reform to give police the tools they need to address the challenges that we acknowledge we do face around youth recidivism.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): Crime data released today reveals that youth crime has gone up a staggering 20 per cent. Why has the Premier failed to keep Victorians safe from violent youth crime?

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:07): The Leader of the Opposition is interjecting across the table about investment. We are proud of our investment in Victoria Police. We are absolutely proud of our investment. I will not talk out of the side out of my mouth, like the opposition leader is doing in this space, talking down the work of Victoria Police.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is again debating the question and talking down crime.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: In Victoria Police’s media statement today they talk about targeting this issue as a top priority – a top priority for Victoria Police – and they reference the work that they are doing through Operation Alliance and Operation Trinity. It is particularly Operation Trinity where Victoria Police are out every night from dusk till dawn working on these challenges, and I want to thank them for that work. We are going to give them additional tools and resources with the introduction of the

Youth Justice Bill. It is about exactly addressing the recidivism challenges that are addressed here in Victoria Police's media statement.

Ministers statements: health infrastructure

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:08): I rise to update the house on the Allan Labor government's \$15 billion infrastructure pipeline, ensuring more Victorians get world-class care closer to home. I want to thank the members of this place who have advocated tirelessly for the health needs of their communities. Our government has backed in this advocacy with funding in this year's budget, delivering on our election commitments. In the member for Thomastown's electorate we are investing \$812 million to deliver a new ED and inpatient tower at the Northern Hospital. In the member for Oakleigh's electorate we are delivering \$535 million to build new operating theatres and more maternity beds at Monash Medical Centre. In the member for Ivanhoe's electorate we are providing \$275 million to expand the existing ED at the Austin Hospital.

Of course work is underway right across our state. I was thrilled to join the members for Monbulk and Bayswater just last week to turn the sod on stage 2 of the Angliss Hospital development. In the member for Wendouree's electorate we are investing \$655 million to deliver a major expansion of the Ballarat Base Hospital, and while unfortunately she is not here today you only have to ask the member for Footscray about the \$1.5 billion new Footscray Hospital and you will be there for hours and hours and hours as she sings the praises of how that health service is going to deliver for all of Melbourne's western suburbs. I know, Speaker, that both you and the Premier are very much looking forward to opening the state-of-the-art \$65.3 million Bendigo Health clinical services campus very soon. Only an Allan Labor government is investing and will continue to invest in the health infrastructure that Victorians need right across our state.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Bentleigh withdrew from chamber.

Community safety

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:11): My question is to the Minister for Police. Victorians are being terrorised in their own homes, with home invasions up by more than 18 per cent in the last year alone. What will the Victorian minister do to stop the home invasion crisis in Victoria?

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (14:11): What we know on this side of the house is you do not catch crooks cutting budgets. There were \$100 million cuts to the police budget when they were last in office.

Brad Battin: On a point of order, Speaker, if it assists the house, I think the fact was incorrect there. You cannot catch crooks cutting Victoria Police by 317 officers in the last two years.

The SPEAKER: I will remind members again, as I did during question time yesterday, that there are ways to raise points of order, and most of you know those ways. That was not the way.

Anthony CARBINES: I notice today that the acting deputy commissioner of Victoria Police Brett Curran in his announcement in a police media statement made the point very clear that in the independent police statistics that have been released we have seen a record 68,000 arrests in the past 12 months by Victoria Police, the most arrests in the past five years by Victoria Police members. I want to start by thanking each and every member of Victoria Police for the work they do day and night. If you do your investments in Victoria Police –

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the minister was asked about the home invasion increase of 18 per cent. Can you draw him back to the question?

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Anthony CARBINES: We understand that there is only one person in this place who lost their seat running on law and order matters, and that is the Leader of the Opposition.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Tarneit withdrew from chamber.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question and also talking down crime.

The SPEAKER: Minister, come back to the question and be relevant to the question that was asked.

Anthony CARBINES: I welcome the point of order from the member for Brighton, in the third-safest LGA in the state on all the statistics available to us. Operation Alliance and Operation Trinity, conducted by Victoria Police, have brought additional resources to bear to break down and disrupt youth gangs, youth crime and youth offending but also motor car theft. We have seen some 3007 offences and some 2500 arrests around Operation Trinity and Operation Alliance. This is about disrupting youth offending and also holding those offenders to account. You can only bring additional resources to bear from Victoria Police and disrupt crime and keep the community safe when you have a \$4.5 billion investment into Victoria Police, when you recruit and fund 3600 additional police and when you go out to the police academy every fortnight and see double squads graduate. That is 48 every fortnight coming out of the academy to be deployed to police stations across the state.

Victoria has the largest police service in the country. We have an offence rate for young people that is lower than New South Wales, one of the lowest in the country. We also know that we need to balance our work to hold young offenders to account with the investments of \$34 million that we have been making in this budget around electronic monitoring and around intensive bail supports to make sure that we are holding young offenders to account. We are also providing police with the tools that they need, whether that is an extra \$215 million that we have invested for tasers for Victoria Police members to make sure they have got the tools they need to do their job day in, day out.

Can I say again to Victoria Police that we thank them for the work that they do. They are the first port of call for all Victorians. Make no mistake that any victim of crime is one victim too many, but it is only through the work and the investment of the Allan Labor government that we ensure police have the tools they need to do their job. There is also, through Minister Erdogan in the other place and his investment, some \$70 million-plus for victims of crime to ensure they have the supports and the compensation that they need. It is only an Allan Labor government that will continue to help victims of crime to get the support they need and hold those perpetrators to account.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:16): Home invasions have gone up by a staggering 146 per cent over the last 10 years under Labor. At the same, time there are nearly 1000 police vacancies and 43 police stations with reduced hours or that are closed. Why has the minister failed to keep Victorians safe in their own homes?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Eureka can leave the chamber for an hour. At this rate, there will be no members left in the chamber by the end of question time.

Member for Eureka withdrew from chamber.

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (14:17): I remind members of the Made for More campaign funded by the Allan Labor government, which is about providing opportunities for more Victorians to put their hand up and serve as members of Victoria Police. Every fortnight we go to the academy, and it is double squads of 48 new

recruits graduating at the police academy and being deployed at stations right across the state. We have invested some \$1 billion in new police infrastructure and new stations across the state. Operational decisions about the deployment of those police and the way in which they operate to keep vans on the road is a matter for the chief commissioner. We do not interfere in those matters under the police act, but we do make sure we support the chief commissioner in ensuring he has the resources and the tools he needs through legislation, infrastructure and people on the ground. But I do say again, for all Victorians, for those who want to make a decision: if you believe you are made for more, join Victoria Police, put your hand up and get in there and help support the community. So many more are doing that, with double squads graduating every fortnight at the academy.

Ministers statements: literacy education

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (14:18): Getting the teaching of reading right matters. Reading is the foundation of a child's education. If you do not learn to read, you cannot read to learn. We know that our NAPLAN results are excellent – top of the class – but we have always got more work to do. It is why from 2025 all schools will be putting, from prep to year 2, structured literacy in the classroom. It is why we are embedding explicit teaching in the classroom. It is why Victoria leads the nation and remains the Education State. Phonics is about teaching kids the sounds of the alphabet and how to blend those sounds into words. It is about extracting meaning from the text. I will give an example: nu-cle-ar. On our side: re-new-a-bles.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier will not incite members.

Ben CARROLL: What do the experts have to say about this? La Trobe University says it applauds the Victorian government announcement that it will embed evidence-based best practice in every classroom. Jordana Hunter from the Grattan Institute said it is a huge step forward. The federal education minister said:

We have the evidence of what works ... I am so glad to see Victoria rolling this out.

Karen Dimmock, CEO of the Association for Children with a Disability, said:

This is a great announcement for all Victoria children and students with learning disabilities ...

I do not want those opposite to miss out, though. David Cameron in *For the Record* – I have done a bit of night-time reading – says on page 392:

Studies show that children learning by the phonics method are two years ahead of their peers.

They are driven by ideology; we are driven by the evidence. We are the Education State under the Allan Labor government.

Health funding

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:20): My question is to the Premier. Why were health services across Victoria instructed by the government earlier this month to cut their budgets by up to 20 per cent by 28 June and to cut services to achieve those savings?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:21): The member for Lowan asked me a question regarding health services and their budgets, and I can say to the member for Lowan – I am sure she passes this information on accurately as well to the health services that she speaks to – that in the state budget of this year of course we provided the most funding ever to hospitals across the state. Of course this funding came with a multiyear focus, recognising that as we come out of the pandemic as a community, for our health services, for our hospitals and most importantly –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question went to a specific instruction around a cut to the budget, and we would ask you to bring the Premier back to the question rather than discussing the topic very generally.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: You are not having a good day. Do you want me to share with you a copy of the standing orders and *Rulings from the Chair*? Seriously, I was asked about hospital budgets. He raised a point of order on relevance about hospital budgets, and I am being perfectly relevant. My dear, not a good day.

I was referring to hospital budgets, and the reason why we have made the single biggest investment ever in hospital budgets and provided that over a number of years is because, as the community has come through the difficult challenges of the pandemic, those challenges continue to be felt –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, your interjections are not helpful.

Jacinta ALLAN: They are incessant as well, Speaker, I would suggest. For our hospitals and our health systems, the challenges that came about as a consequence of the pandemic – illness and virus circulating in our community, the pressure that that continues to put on our hardworking healthcare staff and our hospital systems – are challenges that they continue to live with. Also, as we move through a period –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question goes to the actual pressures of hospitals having to deliver services with a 20 per cent budget cut.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: Also the member for Lowan is misrepresenting what is going on in our hospital system. We have provided record funding.

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: I wonder if the member for Lowan had this much to say when the Murtoa Hospital was closed – did you have this much to say? – because I can say only those who cut services, cut nurses and closed hospitals would talk about cutting into the health budget. Only those who have a record of cuts and closures would come to this challenge with that mindset.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question and being rather unpleasant again.

The SPEAKER: Manager of Opposition Business, I will refrain from calling you for points of order if you cannot do a point of order in the correct manner. The Premier has strayed somewhat from her response to the question that was asked. I ask the Premier to come back.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, for clarity, I just wanted to confirm you ruled in my favour.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Premier will come back to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: You could have given it to him, Speaker; he needs a bit of help today. It would have made him feel a bit better on the last day of the sitting. We will continue to work closely with our hospital services. We will continue to invest in them and the hardworking healthcare staff. Only those who have a record of cuts and closures come to the task of supporting our health system with that mindset. We come to the task providing more funding and support into the future.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:26): Premier, how will health services cut their budgets by 20 per cent in less than three weeks without cutting jobs or services?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:26): I reject the question, firstly. In answering the question, I disagree with what the member for Lowan has put to the house, and I say that in the context that we have provided more funding – an additional \$1.5 billion this financial year alone – to our health

system, a single biggest investment in Victoria's health system, and we have done this by investing in country hospitals and investing in city hospitals, not cutting and closing hospitals and not sacking nurses. When it comes to investing in more staff, there are 5000 more doctors, 12,982 more nurses and midwives and 8000 more allied health workers and other staff. This is what comes with investing in our health system and progressively building up services, infrastructure and the staff to care for Victorians right across the state. I want to finish by thanking those hardworking healthcare workers. We will support them – not attack, cut and sack them, like those opposite.

Ministers statements: renewable energy

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:27): I am pleased to update the house on how the Allan Labor government is ensuring that Victorians in every part of the state can access cheap, reliable and safe renewable energy. Our \$1.3 billion Solar Homes program has installed almost 350,000 solar panels, energy-efficient electric hot-water systems and batteries in Victorian homes, slashing their power bills. The member for Kalkallo will be excited to know that in the Craigieburn community they have got well over 5000 homes that are benefiting right now from cheaper power bills. The member for Tarneit, in his absence, will be absolutely thrilled to learn that his community has embraced our solar rebates, with almost 7000 households installing systems.

Our hot-water rebates are flying out the door, replacing expensive gas hot water with cheap-to-run, energy-efficient electric systems. The member for Box Hill and I visited a wonderful woman called Norma in Blackburn just last month, and she got a rebate and installed a heat pump. She has slashed her bills and has not looked back since. The Treasurer's community is seeing many of these rebates all over the electorate, Werribee topping the total, with over 440 hot-water rebates approved.

To soak up all of this cheap, renewable and safe solar power we are installing 100 neighbourhood batteries right across the state, with the latest round putting batteries in Bass, Bellarine, Bayswater and Thomastown, and certainly Northcote have already enjoyed a couple of wonderful batteries in their community. The SEC's first project is well and truly underway with one of the biggest batteries in the world, right in the member for Sydenham's electorate. I am very pleased that that is coming there. We are getting on with delivering cheap, reliable and safe renewable energy, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who still refuses to rule out nuclear and higher power bills.

Privatisation policy

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:29): My question is to the Premier. Following the government's privatisation of the Port of Melbourne, the land titles office and VicRoads, the Labor government is now looking to privatise Births, Deaths and Marriages and has reviewed all government agencies to find out how much money could be raised from privatisation. Premier, I ask: can you inform the house which other government agencies, assets or services are next in line to be privatised under your pro-privatisation Labor government?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:30): I thank the member for Pahran for his question. I am advised by my colleagues that an entire 2 hours yesterday afternoon was devoted to this subject, but I am happy to go over it again for the benefit of the member for Pahran. At the outset, can I say to the member for Pahran that maybe he missed that bit where we brought back the SEC. Did you not get that memo? Do you want the member for Brighton to write it for you? Do you need help from the member for Brighton to write it for you?

Sam Hibbins: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, was it the 51 per cent SEC or the 38 per cent SEC? Which one are we talking about?

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: I will tell you what it was. We have brought back the SEC. In bringing back the SEC, I note the shadow cabinet has a Shadow Minister for the SEC, a shadow minister who was in

the government that privatised the SEC. That is just a little fun fact for those playing along at home. I make that point to the member for Prahran because I reject what he has claimed in terms of the agenda of this government when it comes to what he alleges around privatisation. I say that in the context of how he has referred to the joint ventures that this government has pursued –

John Pesutto interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: The only things creeping are those behind you.

Members interjecting.

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

Matthew Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER: Do you want to make it 90 minutes?

Member for Bulleen withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: I hope you have all got that out of your system.

Jacinta ALLAN: I reference that because we on this side of the house take very seriously our responsibility to look at opportunities to drive improvements in service delivery. We have done that, for example, with VicRoads, and where there may be other opportunities across government we will pursue those opportunities. But I reject outright the claims from the member for Prahran around how he is characterising these efforts, as privatisation, because our record, particularly when it comes to bringing back the SEC, speaks for itself. We will continue to be focused on supporting improved service delivery on behalf of all Victorians. The member for Prahran can continue to focus on playing politics; we will focus on service delivery.

Sam HIBBINS (Prahran) (14:33): I thank the Premier for her answer. From economists to workers, everyone knows that when a private company runs a public service it is privatisation. The Premier referred to looking to improve service delivery. Does the Labor Premier honestly believe that private asset managers, superannuation funds and investment funds, who are all trying to make a profit – some of whom have actually been recently fined for breaches, such as failing to detect fraud and ripping customers off – are actually better at running public services than the government?

Brad Battin interjected.

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

Member for Berwick withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: There are not many left, are there?

Danny Pearson: Speaker, I raise a point of order. I ask that you rule the supplementary question out of order. The member for Prahran is asking the Premier for an opinion, and that is out of order.

The SPEAKER: It is a fine line. I ask the Premier to answer the question as it relates to government business.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:35): Speaker, taking your direction and answering the question as it relates to government business, I will point to the examples where we have demonstrated action and an understanding that public services are best delivered by the government. That is why we brought back the Latrobe Valley hospital and it is why we brought back the Mildura hospital following the privatisation of those key hospital services for those important country communities. It is a bit of a shame the local members continue to defend that agenda of privatisation, because that did nothing to support health care in those communities, and it was all about profit for those private operators. If the member for Prahran wants to speak to the record of our Labor

government, I show him that record on how we will stand particularly with country communities who had their hospitals privatised by Liberal–National Party governments.

Ministers statements: level crossing removals

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:36): I rise to update the house on how the Allan Labor government is getting on with a bumper winter works program on Melbourne’s Level Crossing Removal Project. While the Leader of the Opposition might be in for a long, cold and dark winter, on this side of the house works will be heating up as we deliver Victoria’s biggest ever road and rail investment. Just last month our fantastic member for Pakenham joined teams as they removed the 80th dangerous and congested level crossing at Main Street, Pakenham. Along with removing the three level crossings, the Pakenham community can now access new stations at both Pakenham and Pakenham East. I can tell you, the East Pakenham station is the Gare du Nord when it comes to stations at Pakenham.

While standing at the new East Pakenham station, it brought me back to 2014 where it all began, when former Premier Napthine, most likely on the learned advice of the Leader of the Opposition, said we could not do it. He said level crossing removals would be ‘a recipe for gridlock, congestion and chaos’. Two things have happened since then. We have gotten on and we have removed 80 of these deadly and dangerous deathtraps while those opposite have blocked and delayed and opposed us every single step of the way. But we are not stopping anytime soon. Next month we will be gearing up for the Lilydale line to be Melbourne’s first completely level crossing free rail line. In the member for Mordialloc’s electorate crews are in the final stages of removing the level crossing at Parkers Road and building a new Parkdale station.

Across our state the Allan Labor government is committed to transforming Victoria’s rail network, and I am proud to share that tomorrow we will be opening the architectural marvel at the new Keon station, our 50th new or upgraded station. In Melbourne’s west, thanks to the tireless advocacy of the member for Melton and the member for Kororoit, we are getting on with removing four level crossings on the Melton line by 2026 as well as building a new state-of-the-art Melton station. While those opposite will be spending this winter arguing amongst themselves and scouring the state for nuclear power sites, we will be getting on with the job.

Metro Tunnel

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Today’s Auditor-General’s report on the Metro Tunnel confirmed that there will be yet another cost blowout, stating:

The state will need to pay more to address remaining issues and finish the project.

How much more will Victorian taxpayers have to pay to finish the project because Labor cannot manage money?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:39): What absolute gall from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition – a party that never delivered a single major project while they were in power, not one, not a single major project.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question. I would ask you to bring him back to answering how much Victorian taxpayers will have to pay to finish this project.

The SPEAKER: I ask you to come back to the question that was asked, Minister.

Danny PEARSON: This project was originally conceived by the Brumby government, and when those opposite came into office back in 2010, they fumbled around. They did not know what to do. They looked at it, and they said it would all be too hard. And who said this:

I'm only a humble citizen of Melbourne and Victoria, but having a massive hole dividing Melbourne would be worse than the Berlin Wall –

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

The SPEAKER: The minister was quoting from a document, but I do ask him to come back to the question.

Danny PEARSON: The point is that those opposite found it all too hard to start this project. They delayed it and they deferred it. It just follows that if you turn around and say, 'Oh, it's all too hard; I'm not going to do it,' and squib it then that will lead to four years of delays.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, it was a very simple question: how much more money will Victorian taxpayers have to pay to finish the project? It is a simple question; we want a simple answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! Points of order are not an opportunity to repeat the question. I ask the minister to come back to the question that was asked.

Danny PEARSON: The issue here is if those opposite had bothered to do any work whatsoever over their four lazy, lethargic years in office –

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is defying your ruling and debating the question, and I ask you to bring him back to answering the question. If he does not know the answer, he should simply sit down.

The SPEAKER: The minister will come back to the question that was asked.

Danny PEARSON: The issue here is that because of the lethargy of those opposite it cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars, because the reality is if they had got on and started this project –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister has now defied you twice, which is grossly improper, and I would ask you to deal with the minister.

The SPEAKER: I ask the minister to come back to the question that was asked.

Danny PEARSON: We are getting on and delivering this exciting project, a project that will be open in 2025, 12 months ahead of schedule. The work underway is at the stage where it is quite complex and quite involved. We have learned from lessons in terms of Crossrail in London, who said that what you need to do is do that important testing work, which we are doing. That is why we have accelerated the opening of the Arden station and why that work is ongoing. We have done 2024 hours of testing to date. The test trains have run 18,000 kilometres. It is a complicated, involved piece of work because we are integrating 21st-century, cutting-edge transport infrastructure technology into two legacy systems, being the Sunbury line as well as the Cranbourne–Pakenham line. We are also making sure that the trains can integrate seamlessly and properly with the other five stations. That requires an enormous amount of work.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, again on relevance, this was specifically on the Auditor-General's report today in terms of how much more it is going to cost taxpayers. I ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Danny PEARSON: As I was saying, the Auditor-General has found that the project is being well managed. It is meeting all the safety and design requirements, and we are working very closely with our construction partners every single day throughout this project. Those conversations are ongoing.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Thursday 20 June 2024

Legislative Assembly

2453

What I would say is that when the TEI was announced in the budget in May at \$12.6 billion that number still stands.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:43): The Auditor-General's report found that the Metro Tunnel will be delayed by at least nine months. When will the Metro Tunnel be complete?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:44): I am rather tempted to yield to the Premier on this to answer this question. This project will open in 2025, 12 months ahead of schedule.

Ministers statements: education

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:44): I am delighted to rise to update the house on the enormous work the government is doing to support Victoria as the Education State. By next year every single student in a Victorian government school will be eligible for a free and healthy breakfast at their local school. In addition to this, there is the school saving bonus. Families in government schools and concession card holders in non-government schools will receive this support to help them cover the costs of uniforms, camps and excursions. Also there is the work we do to put healthcare professionals into our schools, and then there is the massive building program that is being led by the Minister for Education. I got a chance to see some of that when I was with my friend the member for Cranbourne a couple of weeks ago at Cranbourne Secondary College to hear about works that are about to start at that fantastic secondary school. Also with my other friend the member for Ashwood we had a good time at Ashwood High School, where I had a tour of the amazing new STEAM centre at that terrific school.

But of course our investment goes beyond just that in metropolitan areas, and it would be remiss of me not to talk about the support we have given to the Gippsland community. At Paynesville Primary School I hope the member for Gippsland East was out there supporting that – probably taking credit for it. That is how the National Party rolls. I am sure too the Leader of the National Party, the member for Murray Plains, was out there delighted at the investment for Swan Hill North Primary School. Did you take credit for it, Walshy? Yes, of course you did. We will continue to invest in schools right across the state because we are big backers of education here in Victoria.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members to call other members by their correct titles.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I have three very overdue matters from the Premier. Constituency question 494 in relation to a lack of capital investment in Brighton Primary School is 103 days overdue, constituency question 586 in relation to environmental issues in Elster Creek Canal is 60 days overdue and adjournment matter 525 in relation to the Bayley Birds and their good deeds is 90 days overdue. I would appreciate you writing to the Premier and asking her to respond to those matters.

Nicole Werner: On a point of order, Speaker, constituency questions 568, 634, 635, 647, 1124, 1127 and 484 are overdue for an answer. In particular question 484 is about community safety. With the rise in local crime, this is of exceptional concern.

Constituency questions

Brighton electorate

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:48): (700) My constituency question is to the Premier, and I ask how my local community can ensure the state Labor government funds a much-needed pedestrian crossing in Dane Road. The crossing will service the students from Hampton East School, a school that provides for students with additional needs. Hampton East School is newly merged and educates young people from prep to year 12. With the increase in students at the site, there is a new need to enhance local safety. As young student Connor said to me, 'We've already had some near misses of

students getting hurt,' and as student Danny said, 'It's difficult for students to cross the road safely.' As student Kelsey said to me, 'We have no crossing to make it safe to cross our road.' We need to remember these pleas come from young people with special needs. The community agrees with the calls and has started a petition in support. Premier, this school and the local community deserve to be safe, and we call on the Labor government to ensure their safety.

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (14:49): (701) My constituency question is to the Minister for Agriculture. How is the Victorian Labor government's animal welfare grants program helping to support animal welfare outcomes across my community? Project Underdog Rescue is a small but mighty community-based not-for-profit animal welfare charity that was first established in 2015 and is situated on Sydney Road in Coburg. Founded by the wonderful Eva Giuretis, Project Underdog proudly recognises that animals are sentient beings. They run a range of animal welfare and rescue initiatives that support vulnerable or anxious pets, including Melbourne's first fear-free certified mobile vet clinic; helping pets in palliative care with special needs; working with animals, doctors, foster carers and volunteers providing a gold standard of care; and dedication to ensuring each animal is placed into a suitable foster home or perfect forever home. Project Underdog really does provide a truly holistic approach. That is why I was so pleased to announce \$63,500 to improve facilities there, including an area for dog assessments, new cat enclosures, an education space and improved storage capacity. I commend the entire Project Underdog team, including Eva, Tom and Kate, for their work, and I look forward to receiving the minister's response.

Ovens Valley electorate

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:50): (702) My question is to the Minister for Health on behalf of Bill Hussey of Yarrawonga. Mr Hussey requires dialysis three times a week, and cinacalcet tablets have been prescribed. Pharmacies across the Ovens Valley region have told Mr Hussey they are not available. With only two weeks worth of tablets, if these are still unavailable, Mr Hussey will require his parathyroid glands to be removed. I ask the minister for information about how he can access this prescription and avoid surgery, which would be unnecessary for him and put more pressure on our health system.

Bass electorate

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:50): (703) My question is to the Minister for Planning. What is the latest information for the environmental audit overlay areas of Wonthaggi North East precinct structure plan that currently sit outside both developer- and council-led preliminary risk screen assessments, with particular reference to Regency Drive? Last week I met with a residents committee, and I thank them for their continued advocacy to ensure that all agencies, including council and state, continue to work with urgency to resolve this for all those impacted. My team and I have been out doorknocking, letterboxing and making phone calls, and I thank residents for their time and for sharing their stories, and also hearing about the evidence base and PRSA process being coordinated by the Victorian Planning Authority, EPA, council and developers. It is so important that this is done effectively and efficiently so that residents have certainty about their properties moving forward. I am pleased that as the results of the PRSAs come in the minister has committed to making sure the necessary steps are taken as swiftly as possible, and I will continue to advocate for my local community during this stressful time.

Evelyn electorate

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:51): (704) Between Wyuna Walk and McDermott Avenue in Mooroolbark are the old disused netball courts, an area presenting a fabulous opportunity for the development of an open space park with a playground and equipment for younger and older children, community facilities such as barbecues, an outdoor gym and a walking track for Mooroolbark residents and families. My question is to the Minister for the Suburbs: can the government allocate

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Thursday 20 June 2024

Legislative Assembly

2455

funds to Yarra Ranges council specifically to help redevelop McDermott Avenue reserve off Wyuna Walk in Mooroolbark? A few years ago the state government took over this area for a COVID testing site and then abandoned it. Despite commitments to develop the area into open space, nothing has happened yet. I am working together with the community and Cr Sophie Todorov to transform this massive patch of degraded bitumen covered in broken glass that, sadly, attracts antisocial behaviour today into an amazing open park and playground for our community's future. In the past the state government has made available funding under the Growing Suburbs Fund. Mooroolbark residents need and deserve this space to be transformed into open space for community benefit.

Bayswater electorate

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (14:52): (705) Construction is powering ahead on the Blind Creek project, which spans from Ferntree Gully to Wantirna South and is naturalising nearly 2 kilometres of waterways, creating new wetlands, new trails and loads of new open space. This project is one of the largest of its kind in the state's history and is probably one of the biggest projects being delivered in Knox now in terms of scale. Locals are super keen to see works finalised on the current stages, which will see new wetlands and around 17 MCGs – that famous Victorian measurement – of new open space created. So my constituency question is to the Minister for Water in the other place: when can we expect the different stages of works to be completed on this ripping project?

Brunswick electorate

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:53): (706) My constituency question is for the Minister for Housing. A constituent has told me that in public housing in Princes Hill there are about 108 units and around 10 to 14 of these are empty. Some have been boarded up for over a year. There has been crime associated with these units and police have responded, but with over 125,000 people on the public housing waiting list I am keen to know what the government is doing to ensure that this public housing is being put to use.

Kororoit electorate

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (14:54): (707) My question is for their Minister for Emergency Services. With the recent investment in 48 new tankers to support our volunteer firefighters, how will this benefit my community of Kororoit? On the weekend I had the pleasure of officially handing over a brand new tanker to the Caroline Springs fire brigade. Our volunteer services work alongside FRV to assist with incidents, including grass and scrub fires, bushfires, house fires, road accidents and floods. As we know, Melbourne's west is growing rapidly, and we need to make sure that our emergency fire services have state-of-the-art equipment to ensure our volunteers remain safe while performing their vital services of keeping our community safe. I want to say a huge thankyou to all of our firefighters. We are so grateful for your ongoing education and commitment to the Victorian community. Your tireless efforts ensure that our communities remain safe, so thank you.

Mornington electorate

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (14:55): (708) My question is for the Minister for Local Government. Can the minister provide information on Labor's cost shifting to Mornington Peninsula shire, which has inhibited their financial stability and led to proposals like their disastrous online-only paid parking trial? The shire's paid parking pilot, which began in December 2023, has had a major impact on small businesses, local residents, families, volunteers and visitors. The trial was at Flinders Pier, Sunnyside Beach and Schnapper Point, including Mornington Pier and Mornington Park, and has been wildly unpopular. The Rocks, Schnapper Point Kiosk, Mornington Boat Hire and Bay Fish N Trips have had an up to 30 per cent revenue loss. Indeed this trial may have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Mornington Peninsula shire, but it has been disastrous for local residents and visitors, and it has been brought on by Labor's cost shifting in particular.

Bellarine electorate

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (14:56): (709) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education. Minister, how will schools and teachers in my electorate of Bellarine be supported as they implement the updated Victorian teacher and learning model with explicit teaching at its core? The announcement last week that this government will embed evidence-based teaching and learning in our schools, including phonics in early years, is a welcome one. As a former teacher this has long been a passion of mine. During my inaugural speech in Parliament I highlighted how important it is that we continue to review our teacher training and profession to ensure our schools are resourced to tackle the trend that many of our children and students are failing to meet literacy standards. I could not be more pleased to see this recent phonics announcement. I look forward to hearing how teachers and schools in the Bellarine will be supported as these reforms take place.

Rulings from the Chair**Constituency questions**

The SPEAKER (14:57): I have reviewed the constituency questions from yesterday. The member for Nepean asked a broad policy question that he did not link to his electorate or constituents. I therefore rule the member's question out of order.

As I also ruled out two questions from 18 June for this reason, I will take this opportunity to remind members of my rulings and those of previous speakers that constituency questions must relate to constituency issues and not encompass broader policy issues, which can be included in questions on notice, and that members asking constituency questions should ensure that it is clear how their question relates to the constituency. I also remind members that constituency questions must ask questions of ministers and not seek an action and members should take care in phrasing their matters to ensure that their constituency question actually asks a question. Sadly, that is too late for some members today.

Motions**Nuclear energy****Debate resumed.**

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (14:58): It seems a few weeks ago members of the opposition were a bit confused. We heard members of the federal opposition talking about a plan to introduce small modular reactors into areas of Victoria. We heard even over the table in question time people saying that this was just a fantasy, that this was not fact at all. But it comes to my attention that at the same time as they were saying this someone was actually leaking shadow cabinet documents to the media. I will read you Steve Price's article from 31 May 2024, which was around that time, I think you will agree, 'John Pesutto's nuclear comments show he's either crazy, brave or unhinged':

Pressure on Victorian Opposition Leader John Pesutto to keep his job is again certain to intensify after leaked shadow cabinet documents released to this column show him at odds with some members of his party room.

Obviously you cannot trust them.

A number of shadow ministers were gobsmacked listening to their leader on radio late last week dismissing the Federal Coalition's nuclear plans, knowing a similar plan on our nuclear future had been presented to the Liberal leadership by shadow energy spokesman David Davis.

Price went on to say:

That led to me being leaked a copy of those confidential shadow cabinet documents and after reading them I can understand why even Pesutto supporters inside the Liberal Party would be confused and angry.

When it comes down to it, I think what Steve Price is trying to get at is: they do not trust their leader. And I do not think the community does either. We have heard about all this, and then the feds came out and they showed us their plan based on no targets, no data –

Mathew Hilakari interjected.

Paul EDBROOKE: no dollars – that is right, member for Point Cook – but at the same time basically white-anting scientists. The CSIRO did a GenCost report in 2023. The national science agency said the cost of generating 1 megawatt hour using wind and solar would be an average of \$82 in 2030. It projected nuclear power from small modular reactors would cost around \$282 per megawatt hour by 2030. Most of us would believe what emeritus professor – an actual emeritus professor, I might add – Ken Baldwin from the Australian National University, an energy expert, says. Most people would talk to the chief executive of the CSIRO Dr Douglas Hilton and think that he is a man that knows what he is talking about. Not Mr Dutton – Dutton dismissed the report as ‘discredited’, and that prompted the CSIRO to defend its research in an open letter, with chief executive Dr Douglas Hilton saying political leaders should ‘resist the temptation to disparage science’. I might put it another way: close your mouth and appear stupid, then open it and remove all doubt. Questioning scientists like that is one of the dumbest things I have heard, especially when we are talking about something so important.

We have seen the results of industrial accidents in Australia and Victoria. I would not have been in my former job if mechanical infrastructure did not break down, if technology did not go wrong and if humans did not do dumb things and have accidents. We had a situation not that long ago under the opposition government where a whole town was considered to be evacuated. Kids under five were bussed out of the area. People with lung issues, people with potential heart issues and elderly people were moved out of homes. Eleven people died. There was an inquiry about it. That was the Morwell coalmine fire in February 2014. I remember it well. I was there for about 45 days in that coalmine as we monitored the poisonous carbon monoxide going into Morwell. That is a coalmine industry fire, which is not unheard of – accidents happen all the time. That one came about as a result of a bushfire. But, you know what, we did not have the resources to put it out in the time we needed to. We just kept pouring water on that thing, and we put it out eventually.

The people of Morwell have to watch the news and hear Dutton, who does not believe the scientists – the emeritus professors – say that they are going to put a nuclear reactor at Loy Yang. I know from speaking to my parents and other people in the Traralgon and Morwell area that they are horrified. They are still scarred from what went on at a coalmine fire, but now they are imagining what happens when a nuclear reactor goes wrong. Let me tell you from training – that was my speciality; I was a hazmat technician – there is no way of dealing with a nuclear accident, and 50, 60, 70 years of these accidents shows that to be true. We trained for chemical incidents, biological incidents and radiological incidents. There is nothing too scary about chemical; we deal with it every day. Biological: it was after 2001, so it became an issue – anthrax scares, all this kind of stuff. When we came to training for radioactive accidents, whether that be in transport or onsite, I think the general consensus for most of us was to screw the training and run away – it really was – because we learned about alpha rays, beta rays, gamma rays and how to protect yourself from them. Although the Chernobyl incident was in the 1980s, we would still be treating that incident and solving that incident in the same way this decade, because there is no safe way to deal with this; there is no safe way to look at this.

Richard Riordan interjected.

Paul EDBROOKE: You cannot even read the government business program, my friend. I really get scared when people who are intellectually frail, let me say, start talking a big game. Only 10 per cent of the world’s energy is nuclear power, and there is a reason for that. There is not one single small modular reactor that is working now, because they cost so much money. And when these things go wrong, it is not just a car accident; it is not just a fire you put out. These things go wrong very badly. Towns do not just have to be evacuated, towns have to be moved. There are whole places, 30-kilometre zones, where people cannot go any more. I really think that those people opposite can talk about Three Mile Island or talk about Chernobyl, Fukushima, Idaho Falls, the Windscale fire, Kyshtym and Mexico City. These are all incidents where the emergency services at the time could not deal with the issue, and we still cannot because we have no conclusive evidence, no research and no gear that lets us deal

with this issue. When a roof blows off a reactor or when there is a leak, it is deadly, and there is no good way to deal with it without endangering people's lives in the emergency services or in the community.

I bore witness to how badly we responded to the mine fire, and that was just a coalmine on fire. I say 'just' because when I think of Chernobyl and when I think of Fukushima, these were the peak of the future. This was the stuff that was meant to get us clean energy, and in the end we were basically outdone by nature. Look at Fukushima – piles of dirt with tarps on them, water that has been contaminated. We cannot clean this stuff up, and we should not have to clean it up.

The other thing that I do not think has been raised that much in this house is not just the cost of building these reactors but the cost of storing their waste, and that far outweighs over the time we would be living the cost of actually building those reactors. I ask everyone on the other side of the house to have a think about why they were elected. Were they elected just to be an ambassador for their community? Do they put the badge on – 'I'm an MP' – or are they going to live by their values and actually stand up for their community and say, 'I'll listen to you. I might not just say no, but I will listen to you. I will give you a say'? I reckon those communities overwhelmingly will say, 'Not in my backyard – not ever. We should go with renewables. We have seen what happens when nuclear goes wrong.'

Chris CREWITHER (Mornington) (15:07): I rise to speak on this nuclear motion. I note that this nuclear motion has been brought on, though, because the state Labor government refused to and wanted to divert from their responsibilities to talk about crime and their failures on crime, particularly given the stats today, with an increase of over 20 per cent on youth crime and over 10 per cent on crime altogether. But I digress. I fully support Dutton and the federal Liberals on nuclear.

Belinda Wilson: On a point of order, Acting Speaker – which was on relevance, but the member seemed to be just drifting back into relevance as I stood.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): The member for Mornington to continue. It is a wideranging debate.

Chris CREWITHER: As I was saying, yes, I am speaking on nuclear, but I was making the point that the state Labor government had brought this on to avoid speaking on crime.

On nuclear, as I said, I fully support Dutton and the federal Liberals on this issue, and I have personally always supported nuclear. Unlike the state and federal Labor teams, I am not afraid – and we are not afraid – to talk about nuclear, to have this debate, and we are not engaged in nuclear fearmongering. I congratulate the federal coalition team on their bold position on nuclear. It is something that I raised in the federal party room years ago. I know the member for Narracan is probably sick of me talking about federal politics, but I raised it when I was a federal MP. I said in the federal party room we should get rid of the federal legislative restriction along with Tim Wilson at the time. I also suggested to then Prime Minister Turnbull that we and he adopt this as our federal policy at the time.

The fact is, yes, we need to move to lower emissions, but we need to do so while increasing baseload power supply, reducing intermittency and keeping costs down. We are the only one of the top 20 nations not to have nuclear, and many other nations are looking to invest in this, such as the UAE, which already has two nuclear plants and is building another two nuclear plants in just a few years time. We have one of the world's largest and biggest domestic supplies of uranium and thorium.

Nuclear produces baseload power with zero end emissions. We have enough stable land mass and spaces to store the minimal amount of nuclear waste of modern nuclear plants, which we would already need to do anyway with the AUKUS nuclear submarines as well as the Lucas Heights test reactor. We also have key locations at sites of current and former coal plants to put such nuclear reactors with transmission lines, water supply and so forth. It will create jobs as well in regions, such as regions nearby here that have been impacted by the closure of coalmines and the timber industry. It is also important for defence and for energy self-sustainability here in Australia. It reduces the need

for more and more above-ground transmission lines to cope with increased renewables, which in turn also risks fires, takes away farmland and results in the cutting down of trees.

I do note that renewables in the overall supply chain actually do damage the environment. We should not just look at the end emissions. For example, with wind power we see uncontrolled deforestation, often using forced labour, in places like Ecuador for balsa wood used in wind turbines. About 30,000 child slaves are used for the mining of cobalt for lithium-ion batteries used in electric cars and so forth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We see the modern slavery involved in solar panels with Uighur forced labour in China and more. So renewable energy itself is not free from environmental damage as well as labour concerns.

I also fully support getting rid of the federal legislative restriction, along with Dutton and the federal Liberal team, as well as any state restrictions, and I support the need to invest in nuclear in Victoria and in Australia, obviously in suitable locations.

I also note – this is thanks to the member for Benambra; this is a bit of a tip – in Wangaratta, where my grandpa lived for so long, in race 7 at 3:30 pm today we have a racehorse called Going Nuclear, and that is probably something that might be a very good tip for people to invest in.

Jade Benham interjected.

Chris CREWTHER: I think the member for Mildura wants to put a bit of a bet on that.

Jade Benham interjected.

Chris CREWTHER: She has already done it. We do have 32 countries around the world, including Canada, France, the United States and the UK, which use zero-emission nuclear power today to bolster renewables. Across the world nuclear power accounts for more than 16 per cent and growing of energy generation, with lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions from nuclear power being between 10 and 100 times less than emissions from fossil fuels. An additional 50 countries are exploring or investing in next-generation nuclear technology, yet the Victorian state Labor government fails on every single metric to have a sensible debate about the future of nuclear energy in Victoria. As noted, we are not afraid to have this debate today, tomorrow, next week or anytime into the future.

The evidence is crystal clear that nuclear is the cheapest and most reliable zero-emission source of baseload energy, yet maybe the members of the other side have seen *Dr. Strangelove* one too many times, are self-consumed and perturbed by a Cold War mentality and allow their instinct to take hold and just reject, reject, reject. Here are some facts that I raise, and I challenge the other side to just consider debating these in a mature manner and looking actively into the benefits of nuclear: (1) nuclear has the lowest carbon footprint, needing fewer materials and less land than other energy sources; (2) uranium is more abundant than gold, platinum and many other rare metals; (3) nuclear power does not rely on the weather, of which the latter can be very volatile; (4) nuclear power is a flexible baseload source for wind and solar that provides more energy when it is needed and less when it is not, displacing coal and enabling renewables; (5) nuclear energy is about as safe as solar, far safer than coal, gas and oil and safer than almost any other energy source; and (6) spent fuel from nuclear power generation is compact, efficient and extremely carefully managed, particularly with modern-day nuclear plants. I know those opposite are looking to the past, to Chernobyl and the historical Soviet-era nuclear plants, but we have to look at the modern technology here today and the minimal nuclear waste that is produced.

I believe the federal Labor government also supports AUKUS. Do you not support AUKUS and the nuclear submarines? There is a lot of waste that goes with that. That waste will also have to be buried. Already for generations we have had the Lucas Heights reactor. The Labor Party in Victoria and Australia need to have a sensible debate on this issue, as we are willing to do. We cannot ignore all the prospects that nuclear energy offers us in Victoria and across Australia. Let us have a mature debate about its future in Victoria.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:15): I am very pleased to rise on this topic of nuclear energy. I just want to make a quick reference back to the article in the *Herald Sun* from 31 May 2024. Steve Price said:

A number of shadow ministers were gobsmacked listening to their leader on radio late last week dismissing the Federal Coalition's nuclear plans, knowing a similar plan on our nuclear future had been presented to the Liberal leadership by shadow energy spokesman David Davis.

We can see that there is a bit of contrariness within their party. They are not sure whether they are coming or going. They are at sixes and sevens. It is just as we see here with the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024, which offered ample opportunity to transact matters of crime. I do not see why the Leader of the Opposition could not use this wonderful opportunity to set the record straight. Is he for nuclear energy or is he not? What will the opposition lead with? Will they go with Peter Dutton or will they not? This is a terrific opportunity to do so, just as – and I was saying this before – they would have had the opportunity to talk about crime on the justice legislation bill that we were discussing earlier today. I am just putting it out there – just an idea. We would all love to know. I am sure Victorians would like to be clear on this, because I can assure you they do not want nuclear in this state and most certainly there is no social licence for the waste.

Talking about having a mature debate and transacting it, no-one is resiling from this, because actually we brought it up to talk about it today. So this idea that we are running from the debate could not be further from the truth. I am a little bit astonished at the inference there, particularly as I was actually on the nuclear prohibition inquiry. At the time it was a little bit embarrassing for NuScale because they thought that would be the moment they were going to launch small modular reactors. They thought, 'Terrific. We're in this inquiry. Here we go – oh.' And they had a setback. Guess what, at best by 2030, if at all, it may become commercially available. Oh, dear. That was an embarrassment, can I say, and very embarrassing. Never mind. But if you are talking about resiling from a debate, we will debate this any day of the week because, let me tell you, we are very clear on this. We do not want this toxic, extremely expensive energy resource for this state. Let us be real and clear about that.

I do not know if there is also an inference that the CSIRO are not mature because of their research into this topic. They have been very up-front as well – they are not running – so I do not know about this 'mature' concept. Is it immature to talk about cost, to talk about risk, to talk about the future of Victorian children and what we would be condemning them to if we were chucking nuclear reactors all over this country? I do not know. The CSIRO's most recent *GenCost 2023–24* report again confirms that nuclear – get this – is the most expensive form of power generation available. So should we believe the member for Mornington or should we believe the CSIRO? I do not know. I think I am going with the CSIRO, but it is up to the chamber – whichever way you want to go. I am going with the CSIRO. I think the scientists might have it right. But, you know, I am just putting it out there; maybe the member for Mornington knows something that we do not know. Maybe he does. We would love him to put it forward. But in any case, I am sorry, call me old fashioned – I am going with the scientists.

Another really important point: the cheapest forms of power are wind and solar. And, guess what, Australia has abundant wind and solar. So when we are comparing Victoria to other parts of the world, we should look at the weather and look at the geography of our state. This is why when we are talking about where we put offshore wind it is not about penalties, it is about looking at where there are these really strong wind corridors. Yes, because, again, scientists can work these things out. They know where you can get really strong gusts of wind that you can really rely on.

A member interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes, maybe from the opposition. But anyway, coming back to the original point, when we are comparing costs, are we comparing apples and oranges? What are we comparing? The cheapest forms of power are wind and solar – get this – even when coupled with the costs of energy storage and transmission. This includes the costs for building new transmission and firming capacity.

Oh, my goodness, the scientists have factored that all in. Who knew? Fancy that, that they would be thorough when transacting this issue. This includes the cost for building –

Richard Riordan interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: Pardon me, but I cannot hear myself thinking above your voice over there.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Member for Polwarth! Order, please! I cannot actually hear the member for Albert Park very clearly.

Nina TAYLOR: This includes the cost for building new transmission and firming capacity like batteries to complement the new renewable energy projects. So we can see that the scientists have taken a holistic perspective on this, examining all aspects of not only energy generation but also storage and transmission. That is particularly important when we are wanting to have a ‘mature debate’ on this subject. Let me tell you – just reinforcing – we will debate this any day of the week.

Members interjecting.

Iwan Walters: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, there has been a lot of noise, and I believe your direction has been that those at the table should desist from that. I am trying to listen to this outstanding speech, and I would like to do that and be able to hear it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): It is actually incredibly hard for me to hear. Member for Polwarth, I have asked you, please, to allow the member for Albert Park to be heard.

Nina TAYLOR: Clearly I have hit a nerve, but we are having a ‘mature debate’. Anyway, let us talk about other countries, because they are saying, ‘Oh, in other countries they’re all nailing it.’ Let us look at the costs. Experience in other countries demonstrates that initial cost estimates are almost always far too low. I am talking about nuclear when I say this. The UK is currently building a new 3260-megawatt nuclear plant in Somerset known as Hinkley Point C. It provides a valuable lesson in creating a nuclear rod for your back, pardon the pun. The plant was initially estimated to cost \$30 billion in 2016 – that would be £18 billion. The most recent estimate is that the project will now cost – oh, dear – \$61.2 billion or £32.7 billion. In anyone’s language that is a lot of money and that is an enormous blowout.

I will go further. We are looking at other countries; let us go further on this. The most recently completed nuclear plants in the US are Vogtle 3 and 4. Vogtle was built as a pair of reactors, not a single plant, in the hope that this would increase scale efficiencies and reduce costs. Instead the project ran over time by seven years and cost more than \$25 billion more than originally budgeted. The cost overruns were so epic that the builders, Japan’s Toshiba Corp, which was at the time the owner of Westinghouse, paid an A\$5.6 billion penalty to be released from their contractual obligation to deliver the project at a fixed price. All told, the two reactors cost close to \$50 billion.

This is what I really do not understand about the opposition, because they claim to be the party of economics, economic rationalism and neoliberalism and yet they go hurtling towards nuclear when we can see, when we look at other countries that are not nailing it, the blowouts here; they want to go hurtling to that irrespective of these phenomenal blowouts in cost. Part of the reason as well is because obviously they have to have huge safety elements, because nuclear has form. Unfortunately, it has had absolutely devastating impacts on populations around the world, and I do not know why they want to ignore these kinds of consequences. Why, when you are thinking about your children and future generations, would you want to put your head in the sand and pretend that nuclear is safe? I heard the word ‘safe’. Where do they get these concepts from? I do not know.

In any case, one further element when we are looking at comparisons to other countries is a new plant in Flamanville in France, which was originally expected to be completed in 2012. Ten years later it still is not producing electricity; actually that should be more than 10 years. In any case, another plant in Somerset in the UK started construction in 2016 and still is not anywhere near being finished.

Climate change is now. Cost of living challenges are now. This is why we are decarbonising at the fastest rate in the country. This is why we are going full steam ahead with renewables, and we have really strong targets for emissions reduction by 2035.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (15:25): I am thrilled to be able to rise today to speak on this motion about nuclear energy. I did see a tweet today actually from the Minister for Creative Industries. The member for Mornington referenced perhaps an omen bet running at Wangaratta today at 3:30. I am going to miss that race, but Going Nuclear is also trained – here is another omen – by D O’Brien. It is not D O’Brien from Gippsland South, but if that is not an omen I do not know what is. I will let you know how we finish up; it is paying \$20 at 3:30.

Let us talk about some facts, because I do not get my facts from *The Simpsons* and Blinky the fish, who was a cartoon. I had the pleasure of hearing Dr David Gillespie speak about the progression of the technology in nuclear a few weeks ago, and he was brilliant at articulating all of the major concerns that are being thrown around about nuclear. When we talk about small modular nuclear, there are a lot of concerns around nuclear waste. First of all, we already have a nuclear industry in this country. We have Lucas Heights, which obviously has to dispose of its waste already, and we also have the submarines coming as well. For a small nuclear reactor, the waste that ends up being produced is actually recyclable. We cannot do it here – we have sovereignty of all of our resources here, yes, which makes sense – but what happens is they can be reprocessed. They have to go to France. Do you know what France’s biggest export is? It is not champagne, not cheese; France’s biggest export is isotopes. So their nuclear industry is well advanced, and their biggest export is not champagne, it is not cheese, it is isotopes, so they are really moving forward in their nuclear development. We can see it.

The Olympics are going to be held there in, what, 30 days? They did not cancel their 15-day sporting event; they are moving ahead, and they are actually very concerned. They have wind, obviously, lots of wind turbines throughout particularly the north of France, and they are very concerned now – and this is another conversation that no-one seems to be having – about these turbines which are at end of life. What do they do with them? They just end up in landfill. They are very concerned about that. I had a conversation with the mayor of Villers-Bretonneux about this, and he is very, very concerned about it. He was also concerned that they have had that infrastructure there for 20 years producing power but are unable to get it to where it needs to go. So we can learn a lot from countries that are already doing this. We can learn what not to do. We can learn what the future holds from countries that are already doing this.

Let us just talk about Victorians, and we will talk about them right now. The conversation at this point has been that we have leapt over so many things in Victoria. Let the feds do what they are doing, but at the moment we cannot have plans to have nuclear in Victoria because there is a moratorium on it. If the Commonwealth government of whichever persuasion it might be initiates a conversation – I mean, they are having the conversation – but if they decide in the future to lift the moratorium, then we can have these conversations. Is that Going Nuclear running now? It is probably not far away.

And also remember that the Gippsland community that are having the heart and soul ripped out of that region need to be part of this conversation. I sat down with the member for Morwell. I often talk to the member for Morwell and the members for Gippsland South, Gippsland East and Narracan about what the community sentiment is in Gippsland. The sentiment there is of course they want a nuclear industry. Of course they do; they need the jobs. They are bleeding at the moment with the wipe-out of the timber industry much, much sooner than it was supposed to be. They are bleeding from the potential shutdown of their coal-fired power plants. They need the jobs down there, and they are more than happy to have a sensible conversation. It is common sense, and that is what needs to prevail in our energy arguments right now. We just need common sense to prevail. I know that sometimes common sense is not that common, but the Victorian Nationals are doing our best to bring that back and make it sexy again, let us just say that.

After 10 years of energy policy failure Victorians are paying a higher price for power now than they ever have, and when everything else is increasing in cost as well, Victorians simply cannot afford to be paying this price for policy failure. So our focus will remain on keeping the lights on, keeping energy prices affordable and preventing the looming gas shortage, which Labor have failed to tackle because they are too busy talking about offshore wind. Do you know what I call these onshore wind plans? An obstacle course for whales, because that is what it will be.

Labor's 95 per cent renewable target relies on 2 gigawatts of new offshore wind generation by 2032. Construction has not started, and the federal Labor government's veto of the Port of Hastings facility on environmental grounds – because it would end up being an obstacle course for whales – is perhaps a little embarrassing for the Premier, and again it puts Victorian jobs at risk. So we do need to talk about that right now. We need to actually talk about keeping the lights on in the immediate future. Hopefully, in time we will evolve to a point where we can have a commonsense conversation about nuclear, or about any technology that presents itself, because the beauty of having a bit of common sense is that you might remain agnostic and open to any ideas that do present themselves. Even though some are saying that we could build nuclear power plants within seven to 10 years – okay, that is fine – again, while there is a moratorium on it, it simply cannot happen.

My point is we have sovereignty over all our resources. We have a nuclear industry here already. We know how to handle the waste. It can be recycled when we are talking small modular reactors, and we can learn from countries that are already doing it. We need to learn to not be so insular and black and white about these things. We need to be technology-agnostic, we really do, because the future is moving very, very fast. When we look at countries, particularly in Europe, that have had renewables for 20-odd years, they are now at end of life. And solar panels are exactly the same. We have an abundance of solar farms in my neck of the woods. What happens to those solar panels after, much less the emissions that go into creating all of these things, into building them?

So let us have a look at the broader discussion here. Instead of just shaking your head and saying, 'That's wrong,' have a look at some facts. Honestly, the way that Dr Gillespie explained it to me – I mean, if you fail to see common sense in that argument, then you fail to possess common sense as far as I am concerned. It is a conversation, yes, we need to have, but right now we actually need to keep the lights on, and the energy policy, and the policy failure, of the state Labor government over the last 10 years means that Victorians are paying the price for mismanagement of our energy. Did it win?

Wayne Farnham: No.

Jade BENHAM: Oh, damn it. I had it on the nose too. I did not even have it each way, not that that would matter if it was fourth. It did not come close last week anyway.

The inability to have sensible conversations and the fact that Victorians are paying a higher price than they ever have on their power bills and that people are worrying about gas into the future are another illustration that Labor cannot manage projects and they cannot manage money, and it is regional Victorians that are paying the price.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (15:35): I too rise to speak on this nuclear power motion. I just want to touch on a couple of points raised by the member for Mornington at the outset. I think the first thing to remember is to never take a tip from the member for Mornington, because clearly you are going to do your dough if you do – no more racing tips from the member for Mornington.

The member for Mornington was also disappointed that the government was bringing this motion on, but I should actually remind the member for Mornington that it was the opposition that sought to adjourn off the justice bill, on which all of the issues that they were trying to talk about were actually being debated at the time. They chose to adjourn that off to bring on the nuclear motion. And we can see why: because we have had the member for Mornington and then the member for Mildura clearly state their position on nuclear.

The Leader of the Opposition wanted to have a bet each way, so he is clearly not a betting man. We will not be taking racing tips from the Leader of the Opposition either. He came out yesterday and said that the opposition had no plans. He did not rule out nuclear, and he did not say, 'We're going the full nuclear option' – so just no plans. This probably summarises the opposition. They do not have any plans on housing or on how to deal with the population growth; they do not have any plans for transport. I saw that a member of the other place in our area is promoting not supporting any of the further development in Box Hill and not supporting any of the rail projects either. What is the proposal to deal with the increase in population? I think this sort of summarises where the opposition are at – they do have no plans.

One of the areas that I want to talk about in particular in relation to nuclear which has not really been discussed in a lot of detail is the transportation of material – both the transportation of material to get to site and then the transportation of the nuclear waste, the spent fuel rods.

Richard Riordan interjected.

Paul HAMER: The member for Polwarth might say it is the size of a can of Coke, but it is highly radioactive material that stays around for many, many years. There is no known uranium deposit in Victoria, and there are no uranium mines in Victoria, so if we are trying to bring uranium into the Latrobe Valley to –

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Order! Member for Polwarth – it has been a few times now – please do not interject from the table. It is incredibly difficult for me to hear.

Paul HAMER: If we are bringing uranium into the Latrobe Valley, it has to come from somewhere, right? We do not have any ports that can import or export uranium at the moment. In South Australia and the Northern Territory there are designated ports. The two designated ports in Australia to export uranium are Port Adelaide and Darwin Port. So we could bring the uranium through outback South Australia, right through the National Party electorates through western Victoria and right through the suburbs of Melbourne – probably through my electorate of Box Hill – and then out to the Latrobe Valley. I am sure all of our communities would be very pleased. Acting Speaker De Martino, it would go right through your community. I am sure your community would be very pleased to have the trucks running through with the uranium oxide –

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Order! I am struggling to hear. Apologies, everyone. Can I please hear the member for Box Hill.

Paul HAMER: That is obviously to get it to the new power stations that they are proposing down in the Latrobe Valley. I heard Senator Paterson on the radio this morning. The question was asked: where is the nuclear waste going to go? At this stage there is no plan. Just like the Leader of the Opposition said, there are no plans. Hopefully we will see something one day, but at the moment the proposal seems to be that we are going to keep those spent fuel rods –

Richard Riordan interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Order! Member for Polwarth, I have consistently asked you to please stop interjecting from the table. I will be calling the Speaker in. This is a final warning. Please, I would like to hear the member for Box Hill without interruption.

Paul HAMER: You have got the spent fuel rods after they have been used at the nuclear facility, and where will that waste be stored? The small waste that is generated at the Lucas Heights facilities is currently stored onsite because there is no nuclear waste facility in Australia and there is no agreed way of transporting that radioactive material – and it is a highly concentrated radioactive material, the spent fuel rod. We will have the same issue in the Latrobe Valley. How are we going to get it out of

the Latrobe Valley? There is no port in the Latrobe Valley. That material is most likely going to have to go through Melbourne – some parts of Melbourne at least – if not further to get out to a port that it can be exported from or to a nuclear waste facility in some location. Is it going to be in Victoria? Is it going to be South Australia? We do not know. No-one knows. There is no plan. That is what is being said on the radio at the moment.

I want to also have a look at the CSIRO's *GenCost 2023–24* report, which was released only a month ago. In their media release – it is the very first point on the media release – it says:

Renewables remain the lowest cost range of new build electricity technology.

Particularly it says:

It also determined that nuclear power was more expensive than renewables and would take at least 15 years to develop, including construction.

We have heard Peter Dutton talk about a 2035 start date, but based on the CSIRO's report, this is just simply not achievable. It is not going to be before 2040. Again, I heard on the radio Senator Paterson trashing the CSIRO report and saying that they have got their own experts – their own unnamed experts – who claim to know a lot better, but they could not name them and they could not say what these experts were actually saying. The reason why it says it is going to take 15 years is because:

This reflects the absence of a development pipeline, the additional legal, safety and security steps required, and weighing the evidence provided by stakeholders.

It says:

... updated modelling found that renewables – including costs associated with additional storage and transmission – remain the lowest cost, new build technology.

Based on that report, why would we as a community want to be going down this path of developing a new technology? I appreciate that worldwide nuclear technology has been used, but in Australia, because it is going to be a new development and a new technology and because of the level of development and investment that would be required, the cost would be far greater than continuing on our path of renewable energy. The high up-front costs that this is going to require simply mean that this does not stack up. It does not stack up economically and it does not stack up environmentally, yet here we have got champions of nuclear energy sitting over there on the opposition benches that see this as the solution to all of their problems regardless of any other situation. They have never wanted to listen to the CSIRO, and they have never wanted to listen to any of the science on any energy- or climate-related matters, and here they are again just completely ignoring the expert reports, completely ignoring the official agency reports.

Just in the final few moments I also want to reflect on the impact of failure. We have seen far too many episodes across the world where a malfunction in a nuclear facility can lead to absolute catastrophe and be devastating for the families and people who live around there and particularly the workers at the plant and the emergency services. The member for Frankston I think spoke eloquently about his time in the fire emergency service. I commend the motion to the house.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (15:45): I am very pleased to rise to debate the nuclear motion –

Juliana Addison interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: Calm down. Can I actually get started? You have interrupted already. Can I join the debate, or are we going to have a screaming match for 10 minutes? I said I am very pleased to contribute to the debate.

Juliana Addison interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: How about you settle down?

Natalie Suleyman: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, can I ask you to bring the house to order?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): The member for Narracan to resume.

Wayne FARNHAM: As I said, I am very pleased to rise to talk about nuclear. Let us be realistic: an energy debate is what we are having today, and nuclear is part of that. I am glad this has come on, because why have we got to the point now that we are talking about nuclear? I think a lot of Victorians – and maybe the federal government – have realised that our transition out of coal is not as easy as maybe the government thought. Our transition out of coal into renewables is not working as well as people had hoped, and when the government also says that gas will not be part of this solution then that becomes problematic.

In all the meetings I have had and literature I have read, gas needs to be part of our energy solution going forward. It is absolutely essential to the energy solution for Victorians, and this is part of the reason why we are having this debate today. This government was warned about gas shortages 10 years ago. It was warned about the situation we are now in. Unfortunately – or fortunately – in my time building, in all the years I built, 99 per cent of the homes that I built had gas, and at the moment we are looking at critical gas shortages. The government has failed on gas and therefore is putting the energy security of Victorians at risk.

As far as the nuclear debate goes, let us get some real facts about nuclear and not go to the three-eyed fish scenario out of *The Simpsons*. These are just some absolute facts about nuclear: the amount of space required for solar panels to produce the same as a nuclear plant is 40,000 hectares of solar panels, compared to 2 hectares for a nuclear power plant. So let us start weighing up environmental options and food bowl options – or food bowl problems. If we are going to start covering our state in solar panels, where is our food going to come from? Where will our cattle graze? If cattle cannot graze, they cannot produce milk. We will not produce beef. We will not produce sheep. What do we do with this?

This debate is actually so important because I do not think anyone has ever really considered the pros and the cons. There can be cons against nuclear, but there are cons against renewables. I hear that nuclear is four or five times more expensive for power, but part of this argument no-one has said is about the cost of offshore wind. Offshore wind is four times more expensive than what coal is today, which puts it up to over \$200, about the same price as nuclear. What is the environmental impact of our renewables sources in 20 years time? What do we do with the old blades off turbines – onshore and offshore? Offshore is very, very expensive to maintain. So is onshore. What do we do with the solar panels when they reach end of life? Everybody says renewable is cheaper. It might be, but it has only got a certain life span. In 20 years time you start to replace things. No-one has really talked about the cost of the 28,000 kilometres of transmission lines that we will need to come along with renewables. I have never heard a cost on that. How many billions and billions of dollars will it cost this state to have 28,000 kilometres of transmission lines?

These are the mature questions we should be debating. I would love for this to keep getting debated, because we have not had a proper conversation. We have had juvenile conversation. We have had people running around saying the sky is falling, everything is going to be toxic and everything is going to fall apart. That is not the way to approach this debate. The debate should be mature. It should be on facts, and I am happy to listen to facts. I am very much pragmatic about this. But you cannot sit back and just prophesise doom and gloom when you have not looked at it all.

Let us look at job creation, and I will come back to the people of the valley, the place where my electorate is and which neighbours where the proposed Loy Yang site would be. The people of Morwell, Moe and Traralgon, in particular those towns, have been decimated by the government's transition, and there is no argument about this. Last sitting week we had the timber bill, closing down VicForests. That has ended that. They have been under the pump now for the best part of a decade on job losses. The shutdown of coal is going to create more job losses. What is going to replace those jobs in the valley? At the moment, with the new government SEC, which was going to deliver jobs for the valley, one person is employed in Morwell. So when you talk about people in the valley and their trust of government and say, 'We will do this; it will create jobs,' in all honesty they think you

are full of rubbish. If you say you are going to create jobs under the new SEC for the people of Morwell, then deliver. One job – that is a pathetic attempt at showboating the people of Morwell. That is why the member for Morwell is sitting here. He does not sit on that side of the chamber, and there is good reason for that – because this government has consistently screwed over the people of Morwell. I can name time after time after time. There is the timber industry as well, which affected the white paper supply in Morwell, where over 200 or 300 people lost their jobs. The reason we are having this debate is because nuclear would create thousands of jobs for the people of Morwell.

I have lived down that way my whole life, and I can tell you when I was a teenager Morwell was pumping. It was such a good place to go to. They had everything. It was fun as a teenager. It was fantastic. We had bowling, we had theatres, we had all that stuff in Morwell, and I used to catch the train at Warragul down to Morwell and go out for the night and catch the train home. Unfortunately, now when you drive into Morwell and Moe – and Traralgon to a limited extent, but it is not as bad – Morwell is a ghost town. It is decimated. This government has literally killed the town of Morwell. It is row after row of empty shops. It has some of the highest unemployment in the state. So why would anyone not want to debate a power plant at Traralgon, which would create employment, which would create jobs, which would boost that local economy? It is not a negative thing.

We should have a proper, mature debate, not wave our arms around and not just abuse each other over the chamber. We should have a proper, mature debate about this and put down the pros and cons. But what we really should do is ask the people where they stand. I think that is very important. I think we should ask our communities, because I know my community of Narracan is not antinuclear. It is irrelevant what that side says. They do not know my community. Proper debate is what we need.

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (15:55): I am delighted to rise to speak on this motion. I was horrified at the thought that those on the other side would seek to gag us. They gag us because they do not want to talk about nuclear. The reason they do not want to talk about nuclear is because they have no position. They flip and they flop like a three-eyed fish. They cannot decide where they sit on this, and so they tried to shut down this debate. They tried to force through an adjournment on this debate, but we had the numbers and we are glad to stand here and discuss it.

The member for Mornington stood up and said that he wanted to talk about other issues, like youth crime, as was pointed out by my fine colleague from Box Hill. We were indeed on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024 talking about those very things, but those on the other side thought that they would adjourn off that debate. They wanted to gag the debate on justice. So what was next? I know it was a bit shocking – it was a bit secret – but the next thing on the daily papers was the nuclear debate, and didn't they go nuclear at the sight of that? Then they decided they wanted to shut that debate down as well. Well, they can try and gag us as much as they like, but we have got the numbers on this side.

This debate is of incredible importance, and I have been slightly gobsmacked by some of the presentations from the other side. The member for Narracan in his closing statement said, 'Why wouldn't anyone want to debate this?' Well, Member for Narracan, ask your colleagues, because you are the ones who tried to gag the debate. You are the ones who do not want to talk about nuclear. They are the ones that do not want to talk about nuclear, and their leader, the Leader of the Opposition, is extraordinarily silent on this issue. He is not prepared to tell us where he stands. I am curious about their desire to debate when they do not really seem to have a position on it. As I say, they are flip-flopping like a three-eyed frog.

The member for Narracan talked about sticking to the facts, and I know that we on this side of the house find it extraordinary that they continue to deny that the CSIRO are in control of the facts. These are scientists; all they deal in is facts. They are not interested in politics, and they make it very, very clear that nuclear is the most expensive energy that you can get.

There was a comment from the member for Mildura, who likes to talk to us about the notion of small nuclear stations. What is interesting there is in her contribution she kept talking about how we should look to Europe and we should look to this progress. Can I point out that that there is not a single, solitary small energy plant in any OECD country. There are no facts, because it has not been done. So those on the other side ask us to look at the facts. They turn their backs on this debate. They turn their backs on the CSIRO, and then they ask us to believe in something that does not exist. There are no small plants in the OECD.

Then the member for Mildura liked to tell us all about France and how fabulous it was going for France. Can I just suggest that she look a little further into – surprise, surprise – some facts. Dutton himself likes to crow that France has the cheapest power in Europe, with 70 per cent of its electricity from nuclear power. Now, let us get some facts here. Last month France's spot electricity price went into negative as cheap renewable energy flooded its own power market. Combined with reduced demand, French officials shut down three nuclear reactors. Why did they shut those nuclear reactors down? Why would they do that? It is because it was cheaper to use the renewables in their power structure. Those on the other side like to talk about facts, but there is quite a bit of picking and choosing amongst those. There was also the charming description from the member for Mildura about an obstacle course for whales in terms of offshore. Again, I suggest you look a little closer into some of the facts around offshore wind, I believe, being one of the cheapest to produce.

The other fact they like to have – it is a subtle thing you have got to watch for; those on the other side like to get slippery with their facts – is that there was a suggestion that Victorians now pay more for electricity than we ever did. Guess what, that can be said of everyone in the world. There is this thing called inflation, and it is gradually going up. What the member for Mildura failed to tell you is that we pay less than any other state in Australia for our power. Do you know why? Because we have a minister for energy who knows what she believes in and has driven an agenda to make sure that this state is the absolute leader in renewables. I know that that minister for energy and our Premier will fight tooth and nail before we see the most expensive form of energy brought into this country – the most toxic.

The member for Mildura also liked to talk about what we are going to do with the wind turbines when they get old. Perhaps she would like to explain to me what we are going to do when the nuclear power stations get old, because those nuclear rods age as well. I tell you what, if I was trying to find a place to store a turbine, I would be happier doing that than trying to find a place to put those nuclear rods. Right now in Australia we have small amounts of nuclear waste. They come from things like our phones, and, you know what, we cannot find anywhere to put them, because nobody wants them. They are sitting in small spaces and storage systems while we look to develop the relationships or technology to get rid of them. If we cannot deal with low levels of this toxic waste, I would like to hear from those on the other side some of their facts about where we are going to put that toxic waste.

The member for Narracan – in his seat – suggested that we are in some sort of pickle because we have got problems in our energy market and that our renewable plans were not going to plan. I am sorry to tell you I have got some more facts for you. At the moment in Victoria 38 per cent of our energy is generated by renewables. That is a fact. We are working towards 2030, and I reckon we are going to get there or darn close. We have a plan and we are working towards it. Instead the Liberal opposition suddenly turn up with some harebrained idea to build a technology that takes years and years to build, billions and billions of dollars to build, and want us to go off course. Victorians are currently paying less for their power than any other state, and that is because this government has driven a renewable program and that program is working. But those on the other side would like to have us divert.

Finally, one thing I would like to say: I personally believe that a lot of this kind of smoke and mirrors from the other side around nuclear is that they are trying to win the hearts and minds of people on the transmission line routes. I am sorry, but I have got to tell you something: nuclear energy needs transmission as well. You can take it out of those, but they are not –

Danny O'Brien interjected.

Michaela SETTLE: Have you got a policy? Loy Yang does not have the capacity to take nuclear energy out of there. What I would say is those on the other side would have us develop some new system that somewhere near 2050 might deliver some energy of the most expensive form possible.

To the member for Narracan, who I respect dearly – and I love our farming communities – I have to tell you that there is a lot of research out there and people are talking about the fact that farming underneath solar panels increases productivity. There is a farmer that was in the *Age* a couple of weeks ago and talked about the difference it made for the grass picked for his sheep, and there is also I think an American farmer who is consciously doing cropping under solar panels. This kind of spook that we are destroying the food bowl of Victoria is nothing more than another one of their egregious playing with information – I cannot say the L-word. I would like to make it very clear that although they tried to gag us on nuclear, those on our side will talk about it every day.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (16:05): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Bills

Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Repeal and Advisory Councils Bill 2024

Council's amendments

The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham) (16:05): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Repeal and Advisory Councils Bill 2024 with amendment.

Ordered that amendment be taken into consideration immediately.

Message from Council relating to following amendment considered:

Insert the following New Clause to follow Clause 17 –

‘17A New section 44A inserted

Before section 45 of the **Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission Act 2011** insert –

“44A Review of repeal of Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Act 2011

- (1) The Minister must cause a review of the repeal of the **Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Act 2011** to be commenced within one year after the second anniversary of the repeal of that Act.
- (2) The review must consider and report on –
 - (a) the efficiency, effectiveness, appropriateness and co-ordination of functions related to gambling harm across the Commission, the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Department of Health; and
 - (b) the methods used to identify gambling-related matters to research, the independence of that research and the value of any gambling-related research that is conducted or commissioned by the Commission, the Department of Justice and Community Safety or the Department of Health; and
 - (c) whether the Auditor-General's recommendations to prevent and protect the community from gambling harm have been fully implemented; and
 - (d) the availability, delivery and quality of gambling harm treatment services and gambling harm public education programs.
- (3) The Minister must cause a copy of the report of the review to be laid before each House of the Parliament not later than 2 years after the second anniversary of the repeal of the **Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Act 2011**.”.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (16:06): I move:

That this amendment be agreed to.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (16:06): I just want to say a couple of things about this bill wrapping up and the amendment that has been moved in the other place. I will probably not take the full 30 minutes, I think, at this stage. We are disappointed on this side that the upper house, particularly the crossbenchers, have supported this legislation. As indicated last time in here, we do not believe the government has made a case for the abolition of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF), nor more particularly that its new model will actually deliver the services that are required for people who experience gambling harm. So it is disappointing that the Greens in particular have changed their position from voting against it in this chamber to supporting it in the other chamber. In the context, though, of that, the amendment that has been moved by the Greens and passed by the other place with respect to establishing a review of the new arrangements after two years and no less than three years we do think is worth supporting because of the fact that we do not actually believe that this will do the job that is required.

I might say the Greens in the other place indicated that they had come to a deal with the government, come to an arrangement on a number of issues that are completely irrelevant or certainly not related to the actual bill in question. That is a concern, particularly as it relates to other reforms that the government has proposed but has not yet actually delivered, with respect in particular to mandatory precommitment. The member in the other place indicated that the government had agreed to a \$50 default limit for precommitment for mandatory carded play but that that can be changed, so I really do not understand what benefit that has delivered for people with potential gambling issues. Likewise there is a vague reference to some sort of reform of the community benefit scheme, which I do not disagree with. I think it actually does need to be looked at, but it is not clear to any of us what that will entail. Thirdly, I understand there was some discussion about gambling advertising, to which I certainly say, 'Hear, hear,' that we reform gambling advertising. But it seems to be that the minister is going to write to her federal colleague. That is the deal that has been done. So I do not think the Greens have actually got anything out of this in changing their position from what it was in this place.

We remain disappointed that the VRGF has been abolished. As I said, I do not think the government's proposals will actually deliver what they intend to do, because they are sending gambling harm, research and management of gambling harm in three different directions and it will actually become fractured and siloed, which I think is not good. Nonetheless in that circumstance a review in two years as proposed by this amendment the Liberals and Nationals are happy to support.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (16:10): We understand and hear exactly what you are saying. We are very pleased to support the amendment that has been put forward, and we are pleased that it has gone through in the other place. I must say that the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, obviously, in its 12 years has done a tremendous amount of work, and we on this side of the house absolutely do not want to delete any of that work that has been done. It was headed up by Tass Mousaferiadis, who was a fantastic chair and is a really wonderful man. I have had many conversations with him, as I know the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation has also. There has been a lot that has come out of the VRGF that we should all be proud of, and it really is a wealth of knowledge and a body that has an understanding of harm minimisation and trying to do good for the community. We know well and truly that the foundation's functions and related activities that were to be delivered will now come under this new model and will be fine going forward.

We are really strongly advocating on this side of the house that harm minimisation around gambling is of the utmost importance. I know as the member for Kororoit that we have the largest amount of poker machines in any LGA in the state, and it is just simply not okay that people are losing their money to gambling. It is a huge, huge thing in our community, and we want to make sure that harm minimisation continues. We want to support people who need the support, and we believe that this is

the best way forward. Again I want to thank very much the house for the bipartisanship that has been shown, and I commend the bill to the house.

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (16:11): The Greens did have concerns, as did many members, in regard to the bill, which abolishes the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, particularly given the good work that they have been doing, and we also had broader concerns about harm minimisation when it comes to gambling and thought there were certainly many areas of improvement that the government could implement. That is why we were really pleased to get the default loss limit of \$50 implemented and also to have the government have a really good look at the community benefit scheme, much of which seems not to have been used necessarily for community benefit.

Specifically, the amendment, which was put up by Greens MP Kat Copsey and passed by the upper house, requires a review of the repeal of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation and requires a number of specific areas for investigation. Some of those areas were actually raised in the debate across the two chambers. In short, the review will be looking at making sure that the replacement agencies are performing the vital functions and ensuring that the research remains independent and of value. The Auditor-General did make a number of recommendations to protect the community from gambling harm, and these include recommendations that would have improved the work of the foundation. We really want to make sure that the review sees that those recommendations are still acquitted through those agencies that are now performing those functions, and we are also ensuring that harm treatment services and education programs are adequate.

Regardless of members' positions on the bill overall, we have designed this amendment to address a number of concerns raised in the debate, and we hope it gets the support of the chamber.

Motion agreed to.

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

Motions

Nuclear energy

Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:

That this house:

- (1) condemns the federal opposition's plan to send energy bills sky-high with dangerous and expensive nuclear power;
- (2) calls on the leader and deputy leader of the Victorian opposition to rule out nuclear reactors on the Great Ocean Road or in any Victorian community.

And James Newbury's amendment:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted and replaced with the words 'the Allan Labor government be condemned for failing to provide secure, reliable and affordable energy to Victorians.'

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (16:14): This debate that we are having today really surprises me. It really does surprise me. I have said for years in this place that Labor likes to trade in fear, and here is another example of trading in fear. It is not about facts, it is about just putting the fear of God into everybody and hoping that they will all swing your way. I am the first to admit I do not have the answers; I am not an expert in nuclear. I am happy to learn. It is a federal issue. Commonwealth MPs have launched this and are starting to talk about it. It is a discussion. I am certainly going to educate myself, and I hope everybody does the same, particularly on the other side. What I will not do is be a Silly Lily and make stupid claims about what may or may not happen with nuclear.

Labor federally said before the election that prices were going to come down in energy, and what we have seen in fact is that energy prices have gone up. We know that by 2028 Yallourn is going off grid – so is Loy Yang in 2035 – and we need to be looking towards the future. Is nuclear the answer? I do

not know, but I am certainly happy to have that conversation, that discussion, to see whether it might be a suitable alternative, because we do know 440 nuclear plants exist around the world. I do not think they would be there if they were as bad as those on the other side are purporting. There are 32 countries that have nuclear. Again, are they squeaky clean? I do not know, but I am sure those communities would not have that –

A member interjected.

Tim McCURDY: Yes, well, that is exactly what I expect from those on the other side: ‘If you don’t know, vote no.’ Instead of getting the facts and finding out, just vote no. Just put the fear of God in everybody. Get yourself a fact sheet – they have already started rolling them out – about what some of the facts are and some of the quotes are. I heard the member for Box Hill. He was reeling off quotes from the CSIRO and other places. There are plenty of quotes out there. Here is one. Nuclear is:

... a reliable, relatively cheap, energy source that can be used for baseload energy requirements.

Geoscience Australia. Here is another one:

It is unequivocally zero emissions during operation ... It integrates smoothly with our existing electricity grid and contributes to frequency control and system strength.

Alan Finkel, our former chief scientist. Here is another one that is worth listening to – just take a moment, take a breath:

Nuclear power would be a win for the environment and an essential part of attacking global warming.

Bob Hawke, 23rd Prime Minister of Australia. Gee, they have gone quiet now. They have gone quiet. So does Bob Hawke not know what he is talking about either?

A member interjected.

Tim McCURDY: Oh, Bob is wrong. Bob Hawke is wrong. We talk about power and our energy prices going up. We have got to have this conversation. Nuclear, we all know, will take maybe 10, 15 years or even longer, but start the conversations. If you want to find out about how your renewable program is going, come to Dederang. Come to Meadow Creek up in Wangaratta, and Glenrowan, and look and listen to the communities about how renewables are going in our communities. They are frustrated because beautiful arable land is being taken away. If you listen to Labor’s own figures, 70 per cent of Australia’s arable land will need to be covered in renewables if we want to make the energy target that we need.

Our power bills are going up. They are going through the roof. And you continue to have what I would call a bloody-minded approach towards renewables – it is renewables or nothing. As I say, the feds have started – bounced the ball, for want of a better word, Acting Speaker Farnham – to have the conversation, and I think we should have a mature discussion, as you said in your contribution.

Again, others have said that Labor like to talk about antinuclear themes while we have got crime waves, cost-of-living issues, cost blowouts, the Metro Tunnel, roads, health issues – I mean, the list goes on and on, and they want to talk about anything but those things. They can talk about nuclear, the queen of distraction: ‘Look away – nothing to see here.’ This is part of the way they operate and do business. Victorians want their energy bills affordable, reliable and clean, and from the bit of research I have done – and I have got a lot more to do – I know that a nuclear power plant is very expensive to build but then the running costs are much cheaper. And when you build something that goes for 80 to 100 years versus a wind turbine or a solar panel that might have a lifetime of 15 to 20 years, well, you have got to do the sums. You have got to do the cradle-to-grave, so to speak, to try and get the full understanding of what power will cost and not just invent figures on your own. You have actually got to get some of those facts.

As I said, Victorians want affordable, reliable and clean power, and after 10 years of hard Labor in Victoria power is certainly not affordable now. I am sticking my hand up to say: let us look at all

options and let the communities make their decisions. Those on the other side are very quick to want to speak on behalf of those in the Latrobe Valley. It has been mooted that there might be an opportunity to put a nuclear plant down there. Let them decide. Let them have the discussion. Give them the courtesy of having that discussion rather than the stupid memes that we have seen, even on the Premier's Facebook page. That was just disgraceful, surely you have got to agree, the three-eyed fish stuff. There is a level here, and you can drop to this level, but you can go way down there. You would not have seen that from your former Premier, I can tell you. It would not have been on his Facebook page, I can assure you. He had more brains than that. That is just disgraceful.

In terms of building a nuclear plant, I wonder if they asked Mr Setka if Mr Setka wanted to build a nuclear plant. He could spend many, many years with his CFMEU. They might change their tune. They might say, 'Actually, hang on a minute. Nuclear might be worth looking into, because there's a project that we can look at and try and get some work out of.'

I am sure they will change their tune as time goes on, but I just would like to see a healthy and mature discussion. The member for Mildura mentioned Dr David Gillespie. I heard him speak recently. He is a wealth of knowledge, one of many in the country that is a wealth of knowledge, and across the world. I think we have to pull all that knowledge together and make some considered opinions.

I will listen to many experts, but not necessarily those on the other side who are just reading their notes from somebody who sent them to them by email. Do your own research. Has it got handwriting on it, or have you just printed it off? These are handwritten, see? That is my poor handwriting. They are not the typed notes that you get from the Premier's department. As I said, I really would like to see those on the other side consider the facts and get some common sense in this discussion.

Members interjecting.

Tim McCURDY: Well, this is what I am saying. Get some facts. Educate yourself. I am telling you I am prepared to admit I do not have all the answers. And I can tell you what, you certainly do not either when you stand up and just dribble on with your notes saying how bad it is going to be and what a disaster – Chicken Little, the sky is going to fall down – without putting any facts forward either. The member for Narracan was very accurate when he said we need to have a commonsense approach and a fair discussion, and I hope that in time you will see that a commonsense approach is the way forward and we can all have a civil discussion about nuclear, whether it is right, wrong or indifferent. I am happy to find out the answers myself as well.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (16:23): Acting Speaker Farnham, it is with disappointment that I rise today to speak on this motion, but I take on your invitation that this discussion needs to be a mature discussion, and I listened to your contribution wholeheartedly and keenly. But somewhere, somehow we need to take the view of the previous speaker that, if you do not know all the answers, maybe we should rely on facts and not fantasy. It is disappointing because Victorians do not want a nuclear reactor or nuclear waste in our backyard.

A member interjected.

Meng Heang TAK: No, not much. That is true in my community, and that is true across Victoria. We have heard nuclear is the most expensive, toxic and dangerous form of energy out there. The facts are here. The CSIRO found that nuclear power is up to eight times more expensive than large-scale wind or solar power, and they also estimated the development timeline is at least 15 years for nuclear power.

A member interjected.

Meng Heang TAK: This is only the science, that is right. On this side of the house we can be very clear that nuclear energy will not be built in Victoria under this government and nuclear waste will not be dumped in Victoria under our government. Instead, we are getting on with the job of delivering cheaper power and keeping the lights on as our transition is getting underway. These are extremely

important issues for my community. Cheaper power is extremely important, especially in the wintertime, right now. Cost of living is front and centre of the minds of the residents in my electorate. The bills, everyday bills, and balancing the family budget are constantly on the minds of families in Clarinda and across the state. This is particularly so in the City of Greater Dandenong, which is right up there in terms of Victoria's most socially disadvantaged local government areas.

In our community there is great concern regarding the nuclear debate. Of course we want to have a mature debate, and the facts are that nuclear means higher power bills. It is as simple as that. The evidence is clear. We have heard from other members who said that the CSIRO's most recent report *GenCost 2023–24* confirmed that nuclear is the most expensive form of power generation available. Alternatively, the cheapest forms of power are wind and solar, even coupled with the cost of energy storage and transmission. Given the cost-of-living pressures in my community, across our state and across the country, it makes absolute sense that this is where our focus is – cheap, clean and reliable power.

We are extremely fortunate in Victoria with our world-class wind resource. Just recently here in this place we had before us the Energy and Public Land Legislation Amendment (Enabling Offshore Wind Energy) Bill 2024, which I was proud to make a contribution on along with many of my colleagues here. A large focus of that debate was also cost of living and how we are utilising our renewables for bills and cost-of-living pressures. Again, I will make the point that cost-of-living relief is also important for those doing it tough. For those on fixed income support, for pensioners and for those doing it tough, every little bit helps, every little cent helps. This debate is really important. The Allan Labor government has been delivering real and meaningful help from free kinder to free TAFE, and there are also many more initiatives. We are helping Victorians and Victorian families, in big ways and small ways, because every bit adds up. Making sure that we capitalise on and utilise our renewables, our world-class wind and abundant sunshine, which really make us a global renewable energy powerhouse to deliver cheap, clean, reliable energy, is really important. We need to continue to capitalise on that.

We also have the opportunity to produce electricity far more cheaply than almost anywhere else in the world by harnessing our wind and solar resources. This government has a great track record of doing just that. Victoria already has the lowest wholesale power price in the national electricity market due to our record investments in renewable energy over the past eight years. The question that needs to be asked is: why should we throw away our competitive advantage by building the most expensive form of power generation available? Instead, we have a really positive outlook here in Victoria, a positive plan with a lot to be excited about in onshore and offshore renewables and of course the SEC. It is particularly exciting news for the SEC's first project, a 1.6-gigawatt battery in Melton first and also many other places. It is one of the new renewable energy generation and storage projects helping accelerate the energy transition and driving down the cost of living. The project will power over 200,000 homes, which is amazing. By storing excess cheap, renewable energy in batteries, homes and businesses will utilise more cheap, renewable energy, and by powering the state through more renewables and more often we avoid the reliance on expensive coal and gas without causing high bills. We need more renewable energy storage to put downward pressure on power bills, especially in wintertime.

Again, this demonstrates the focus of the government, playing this role and delivering these projects. That is our focus – delivering cheap, reliable, renewable energy, putting power back in the hands of Victorians and accelerating our transition to cheaper, more reliable renewable energy. We are leading the nation on renewables and on climate action, and that is something to be really, really proud of. It is a legacy for our children, making sure that we protect the climate for our kids – our generation's children – our grandchildren and the future generations. We continue to meet that task. Our transition is underway, and we are well on our way to meeting our target and delivering for future generations. This, I believe, is a mature discussion that we are having here, Acting Speaker. I am looking forward

to having even more mature discussions with you into the future. We will continue with that positive outlook – getting on with the job of delivering cheaper, cleaner, reliable power for all Victorians.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (16:32): It is a pleasure to rise to debate this motion. I have tried very hard to get excited about the announcement of nuclear energy from the federal opposition leader, but I am struggling. I am struggling to get excited about the idea of nuclear power plants at the sites of our major coal-fired power stations. Frankly, I do not think it has got a hope in hell. I think that the prospects of this happening are close to zero. The member for Clarinda has easily and efficiently debunked the arguments against renewable energy and in favour of nuclear energy. I barely need to repeat them, but to summarise, as carefully explained by CSIRO, the cost of building and, people forget to mention, decommissioning nuclear power plants and dealing with the waste, which will last thousands of years, not to mention their voracious water use and safety concerns, is massive. Nuclear energy will be the most expensive form, and we will have to go a long way, I think, to find a billionaire willing to invest in it in Victoria when we have got so many other wonderful options. We could, for example, just drill for gas near the Twelve Apostles or we could invest in Victoria's abundant renewable energy resources – whatever. I think that the fairly scientifically illiterate arguments that we have been hearing against renewable energy really need to be called out for what they are, which is a sort of modern version of the Luddites, who opposed technology a couple of centuries ago. I think that given Victoria's abundant wind and sunshine and Australia's landmass available for renewable energy, we would go a long way before we could find anything more cost-effective.

I will just single out a couple of other points made by some of the speakers from the coalition. The idea of renewables competing with farming has been debunked by the Clean Energy Council, who have calculated that we would need 2 per cent of Australia's landmass to generate 27 times more energy than we currently are using. Also, as a previous speaker mentioned, renewables and farming can coexist in many places. Certainly wind farms do not take up a lot of space, but solar farms can coexist with sheep grazing. In fact in some places they have found they have got more green grass with the condensation run-off from the solar panels, giving them more prolonged green pick through the year, increasing, believe it or not, the productivity of the sheep farm.

As I said, the member for Clarinda debunked all of these arguments, and it is not surprising really, because in a way the coalition, by promoting nuclear energy at this time, is doing both the federal and state governments a service by creating a sort of straw man. The nuclear argument is so easily defeated that it is a convenient distraction from the far more important issue, which is that every single day that we stand here and talk about nuclear or not nuclear we are burning over 100,000 tonnes of brown coal in Victoria, which is an extraordinary amount and kind of hard to visualise. So I will make it a little easier for you. If you put our daily coal consumption onto a coal train – which we do not do in Victoria, but just imagine if you did – the train would be over 20 kilometres long. It would be arriving at Glen Waverley Station before it had left Flinders Street. That is a massive amount of coal, and we burn that every day, and when you burn 100,000 tonnes of coal even something that is present in a very small concentration in the coal can become quite voluminous in the atmosphere. We produce over a year about a tonne of mercury compounds in the atmosphere over Gippsland, and that mercury is found in tests taken from wildlife in Gippsland and would probably be found in humans as well if it was done.

The 100,000 tonnes of coal we burn every day is burnt in 10 electricity-generating units found in three power stations. I think it is four at Yallourn, four at Loy Yang A and two at Loy Yang B. That is 10 units that we have got to retire between now and the government's target year of 2035. I reckon we could do it faster. I reckon we should be able to close one of these units each year over the next decade. One of the other things we could do to burn less coal is require coal power stations to turn off one or two units during forecast periods of lower demand. Demand for electricity is seasonal, and at the moment peak electricity consumption is on hot summer days, presumably due to air conditioning. We probably do not need all 10 coal units burning through winter when peak demand is during summer, so there may well be months in the year, particularly perhaps as we move increasingly towards getting rid of gas from homes around autumn and spring, when we could turn off a coal-burning unit for a

month or two and put less of that mercury, sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere while we are waiting to build all the renewables that we need or, if you are in the coalition, the nuclear power plants, which I do not think we are ever really going to get.

I do not know if the member for Box Hill is here. Oh, yes, the member for Box Hill is here. I wonder whether the Prime Minister has gone on a bit of a fission expedition here just trying to pull out opponents and provoke them by suggesting nuclear. I wonder whether it is really a serious proposition. Further, we need far more renewable energy than we have got. Right now we have got something over a third of Victoria's electricity generated by renewable energy, and we have got a target of over 65 per cent, I think, by 2030 but certainly 95 per cent by 2035. So to get there we need to build a lot more. A lot of the easy spots have been taken, so we need to build out the grid with more transmission lines so we can hook up more solar farms but we also need to build wind farms in places that are harder to build in, like Bass Strait. That is going to cost a lot of money, and it is not clear that the renewable construction pipeline is quite ready – that there are enough projects in the pipeline to meet the 2035 target. To do that, something like a government-funded renewable energy agency would do the trick to fill in the gaps where the private sector is falling short. That is why the idea of the SEC seemed like a good one before the election, when it was announced. The problem is the SEC only got \$1 billion and around a third of that has already been spent on some battery projects, and a fair amount has been spent on photo ops and T-shirts. There is not enough money left in the SEC to fund a decent-sized renewable project to contribute towards the 2035 target. The SEC needs more funding.

To give you a sense of the scale, the SEC's billion dollars pales into insignificance compared to the almost \$10 billion achieved by selling the Port of Melbourne. Because renewable energy projects will generate money – they will generate revenue – I do not believe we need to privatise anything to build more. It is an investment into a revenue-making venture. I believe that we can dramatically increase the funding to the SEC and build enough renewable generation and transmission projects to cover the shortfall in the pipeline of planned projects to get us on the path to 100 per cent renewables by the end of the decade.

I think that given we have heard a bunch of arguments against renewables because of their supposed impact on agriculture, we do need to listen carefully to questions about where transmission lines and renewable projects are situated. We need to take account, for example, of the type of farming affected by renewables projects. Some agricultural land is very productive and worth a lot more, and having a blanket compensation fee per kilometre over all kinds of land might not adequately compensate farmers who have a small farm that is highly productive. They might need more compensation per kilometre than someone who has got relatively low-grade farmland that is far less productive. I think that transmission lines and, where possible, renewable projects should be situated on agricultural land, particularly degraded agricultural land, rather than native forest.

I also think we could do more to put renewable energy generating projects where the grid is strongest. That might mean putting more solar panels in the Latrobe Valley in and around currently coal-fired power stations, because they have got the best grid connections, and putting more of them around the Portland aluminium smelter, which is Victoria's biggest energy consumer. Even though Portland and the Latrobe Valley are not the sunniest parts of Victoria, the fact that they have got the best grid connections would mean that the need for urgent transmission lines is reduced, because we know we can hook those projects up where the transmission lines are strongest.

I think that the other thing we can do is look at some of the new technology that Loy Yang A is introducing to enable them to just dial down the amount of coal they are burning from time to time. One of the problems with brown coal fired power stations has been that they have been unable to switch off or slow down. If you turn off a brown coal power station, it takes about a day and a half to start it up again. But Loy Yang A is installing some new technology which will enable it to dial down its rate of generation, and we should require Loy Yang B to do the same. As it is the youngest power station, it is probably going to hang around the longest.

Another bit of interesting technology has been installed in some aluminium smelters. We need to think about the Portland aluminium smelter kind of on the same page as our coal-fired power stations, because that smelter uses about as much electricity as one of those power stations produces. If we were, for example, to close the smelter, one of those power stations could close overnight, and vice versa.

Dylan Wight interjected.

Tim READ: To reassure the number for Tarneit, I am not suggesting that we close the smelter. Instead what we should do is require the smelter to introduce modern insulation around the aluminium pots so that when it is switched off the aluminium does not solidify and need to be thrown out. There is at least one smelter in Germany that does this. What it does is accept payment from the government for switching off, and because it has got this extra insulation it can keep the aluminium molten. This then means it has got an alternative source of revenue and it can switch off at times of high power demand. As we get more and more renewables onto the grid we are generating more power than we need at lunchtime and not enough at dinnertime, and so instead of continuing to consume electricity at 7 pm we want a smelter that can switch off for a few hours. Simply doing that will mean that we do not have to build as many batteries, and batteries, as the SEC has discovered, are way more expensive than some of this new technology that makes a more rational use of the power that is available.

I will conclude by pointing to one other area of technology, which is now present in the parliamentary car park. Every week I go out into the parliamentary car park, I see more electric vehicles. The car that was going to ruin the weekend only a couple of federal elections ago is now a popular possession of Labor and Liberal members alike, and I am delighted to see EVs proliferating in the parliamentary car park. But what people do not quite appreciate is that the combined battery power of half a dozen Teslas is about the same as the battery capacity of the community batteries being opened up around the suburbs with great fanfare. The community battery that opened with much hoopla and spin in North Fitzroy – and it is a wonderful thing – has a storage capacity of about 300 kilowatt hours. That is about five Teslas. In other words, the point I am making here is that very soon the family car will be able to be used as a storage resource for our grid. If you can take, say, 10 kilowatt hours out of your car battery and use it to power your home overnight, you are not drawing from the grid.

Some cars are capable of putting power back into the grid or back into your home, but currently most electric vehicles on sale in Victoria are not. But if you read Saul Griffith's book, you can see the potential of using electric vehicles as a kind of electricity storage so that we can essentially shift electrical power from lunchtime, when we have an abundance of solar, to dinnertime, when we need the power but the sun is not shining. I am only aware of one brand of EV currently capable of doing that, but I think we should require all EVs sold in Australia to have that capacity. If the Nissan Leaf can do that, why can't all of them?

I had better return to the motion before someone calls me out on this, and I am very glad that the member for Tarneit has not yet. But as I said at the beginning, nuclear energy is a distraction. It is a straw man. The member for Clarinda destroyed the coalition's arguments in favour of nuclear energy. It is dead in the water. We need to focus on why we are still burning 100,000 tonnes of coal every single day in this state and what we can do to get off coal faster. That is the motion that we should be discussing, and I will retire before someone tells me to shut up.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (16:50): I do not know if you have ever wondered what we are saying on this side of the house sometimes, but during constituency questions I turned to the member for Point Cook and I said, 'That member for Mornington, I don't reckon he's got a bad bone in his body.'

A member interjected.

Lauren KATHAGE: It is true; that is what I said. I think probably not 20 minutes later, as I walked past the TV in the annex, I had to swallow my words, because do you know what I heard the member

for Mornington say as I walked past the annex TV? He said, very proudly – he has excellent posture – ‘I fully support nuclear. I fully support Dutton.’ He was so proud in that moment that he was finally ungagged. He has been ungagged by the federal government, and now he can say what he wants to say in this chamber. Yes, his best colours are shining through. He even claimed credit. I do not know if you heard that. He said, ‘I suggested nuclear in the federal party room when I was a federal member,’ so the member for Mornington is the one who has brought nuclear here to Victoria. He did raise six points for why we should go nuclear, and I did miss some of them because I was feeling a bit faint and dizzy at that stage. One of the points he raised on why we should have nuclear was because we have more uranium than gold.

A member interjected.

Lauren KATHAGE: That is what I said: ‘What?’ I am not sure how that argument works. He said, ‘Nuclear is as safe as solar’ – which I believe is the town motto for Fukushima – and he said that the waste is compact and well managed.

I want to talk about that waste, because the member for Mildura also spoke about nuclear waste. She must have had a fantastic time with that mayor in France, because she keeps on bringing up conversations she had with him in the chamber. Last time she said she spoke to this mayor in France and he said, ‘We put solar power on our public buildings.’ She came back to the chamber in Victoria and said we should put solar power on our public buildings – well, surprise, we do. She said that this mayor in France – he should come to Parliament here – is very concerned about the wind turbine blades that they have there in France and is worried about what will happen to them at the end of their life, as though wind turbine blade waste is something that just cannot be overcome. We should get rid of wind energy because there are these wind turbine blades, which are probably only dangerous if you can manage to throw them at somebody, but you probably could not because they are quite large. I am happy to reassure the member for Mildura and indeed the mayor in France somewhere that Siemens have developed recyclable turbine blade technology, because science progresses and these turbine blades actually can be basically fully recycled. They can be used as soundproofing et cetera. Is that the case with nuclear waste? Would you like to use nuclear waste as soundproofing in your home? It might melt your ears, but I do not think it is going to work as soundproofing.

The member for Mildura mentioned how compact nuclear waste is and how in France they recycle their nuclear waste. I thought, ‘Oh, that’s interesting. I do want to debate the facts and learn what’s going on.’ I learned that the 1150 tonnes of nuclear fuel waste that is produced in France each year goes and sits in a pool for seven years – and I think that is what we all want to do now on the winter break, just like the radioactive waste. A certain amount, though, cannot be recycled, and that is 46 tonnes a year. So 46 tonnes of nuclear waste – I do not know, is that compact? I am pretty sure it can still have a pretty negative impact. ‘It is compact’ – 46 tonnes. Can I remind those present – it has its own Wikipedia page – about the West Australian radioactive capsule incident. Do you remember when a piece of radioactive waste fell off a truck in Western Australia? Hundreds of people were out looking for it. We were told that the amount of radiation emitted by the capsule could induce burns and radiation sickness and was potentially deadly to humans. How big was that capsule? Was it as big as 46 tonnes, 10 tonnes, 1 tonne? It was 6 millimetres by 8 millimetres. That is how big it was. That is compact and that can still kill you. That is how dangerous nuclear waste is. I am not going to worry about that, but when things go wrong, because they do – things fall off the back of trucks, leaks occur in the uranium plant in Kakadu – what will Dutton say? ‘I don’t hold a Geiger counter, mate.’ Is that what he is going to say when things go wrong? He does not hold a Geiger counter. So who is going to cop it? We are going to cop it. The community is going to cop it. He will be long gone by the time we have nuclear power. He will have retired, in France, sitting in a pool, for seven years.

The member for Mildura said, ‘Let’s have a mature discussion.’ That is the key line they keep repeating: ‘Let’s have a mature discussion.’ But they are not going to have a conversation with their communities, not a real one. The member for Mildura, talking about Gippsland, said the sentiment there is of course they want a nuclear industry. The member for Mildura says, ‘Of course they want a

nuclear industry.’ If you are representing your community, would you really come out, without having spoken to people, without having time for this news to sink in, and already have decided that the community supports nuclear? We can see that the Nationals members are not listening to their communities. What are they listening to? You need to go and ask your community what they think. Ask them: ‘Do you want a nuclear power plant on the site of Loy Yang B, where an earthquake knocked out three of four generators?’ They might like to ask them: ‘Do you want to store 46 tonnes of nuclear waste?’ ‘Do you want it travelling on your roads,’ they might ask them, ‘and buried in the ground there each year?’ That is 46 tonnes each year; it is cumulative. We understand compound interest as well over here. Do they want the most expensive form of power in their communities? They are the questions that the member for Mildura and the members for Gippsland South, east, west, north and all in between should be asking their community members, not coming in here and saying we should have a mature discussion.

But they have already decided what their community members want; they believe that their community members want nuclear. Well, I tell you what, we have heard loud and clear the opposite from community. Victorians do not want nuclear reactors in their state. They do not want nuclear waste in their backyards – the most expensive, toxic, dangerous form of energy there is. We on this side of the house can be unequivocal. We are singing from the same song sheet over those opposite. We heard from the member for Mornington that he is fully supportive. Then we heard from the member for Narracan: ‘Oh, well, we should hear the pros and cons, the positives and the negatives.’ We, though, are unequivocal. Ask any of us how we feel. We do not support nuclear energy in Victoria – not today, not tomorrow, never. Never will we support nuclear energy in Victoria, and I ask those opposite to stand up if they do not want nuclear –

The SPEAKER: Order! The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business. The member will have the call the next time the motion is before the house.

Bills

Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Jacinta Allan:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

*Rulings from the Chair***Parliamentary precinct security**

The SPEAKER (17:01): The Manager of Opposition business took a point of order asking me to advise the house on Victoria Police's views on access arrangements to Parliament House and reforms to the Parliamentary Precincts Act 2001. Members will understand that Presiding Officers will not discuss security arrangements in a public forum, such as the chamber, though any member is welcome to meet with me in my office to talk about security matters. I would add, though, that views expressed by Victoria Police are not matters for the Presiding Officers to clarify.

Acting Speakers

The SPEAKER (17:01): The Manager of Opposition business took a further point of order to express concerns about the impartiality of Acting Speakers. Any member is entitled to give notice of a motion of dissent in the Chair's ruling, which is the appropriate mechanism for dealing with those concerns rather than a point of order. However, I point out to all members that the panel of Acting Speakers receive detailed and ongoing training with the Clerk's office and with the Deputy Speaker and Speaker. We have regular meetings about issues that arise in the chamber and will do so again in the next sitting week. I remind members that chairing a debate can be challenging, particularly in a debate with many interjections and points of order. We have all had moments at the footy of thinking the umpire got it wrong about our team, but I am sure it feels different from the umpire's view – and I say that as a Collingwood supporter.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Youth crime

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (17:02): (721) I ask the Minister for Police what tangible steps he will take to keep the law-abiding members of my community safe. It almost breaks my heart to stand here and tell the house of a 77-year-old lollipop lady in my electorate who has been so traumatised by youth violence that she is literally trapped in her own home suffering nightmares and ongoing anxiety.

The job she loved has gone. The Campaspe shire has closed her school crossing for the safety of its two dedicated staff who were there every day, rain, hail or shine, while it works with Victoria Police and the Department of Transport and Planning to 'resolve an ongoing safety issue which has escalated'. That is an understatement. By 'escalated' it means that it is no longer safe for the two dedicated lollipop team members, who had been arriving at this site to clean up the broken glass and gather up the screwdrivers, hammers, assorted knives and, on one occasion, an axe at this crossing before the children used it. For 18 months both ladies complained to council about the pack of boys, some as young as nine, subjecting them to verbal abuse and threats, only to be told they were minors so nothing could be done.

A few days after the tragedy of the Sydney stabbing horror, the lollipop ladies were confronted by one of the pack with a seriously large knife, and at last the police were called. From then on the attacks worsened. Rocks were thrown. One of the women was aggressively confronted by an 11-year-old as

she sat in her car waiting to start work. He tried to grab the keys from her ignition. She managed to push him off and lock the car. Finally, council intervened and suspended services – hardly a preferred option, considering the number of children using this crossing on a busy highway.

Minister, please do not tell a 77-year-old lollipop lady that these vicious youths are too young to understand what they are doing wrong. Please do not tell this 77-year-old woman that the 11-year-old that tried to assault her in her car was too young to know what he was doing. The police and the courts are hamstrung by the current laws when attempting to protect people like this 77-year-old, who has now lost her job and is suffering nightmares and anxiety. Minister, what tangible steps will you take to make sure these two lollipop ladies and many like them are protected from the wave of youth crime in this state and can feel safe going about their normal lives?

Mac.Robertson Girls' High School

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (17:05): (722) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. The Allan Labor government's unwavering dedication to supporting upgrades and construction of new schools is appreciated by the community across Victoria and in my seat of Albert Park. In my seat we have built two wonderful new primary schools, South Melbourne and South Melbourne Park primary schools, and we have continued to improve both schools. The local schools of Port Melbourne, Albert Park and St Kilda Primary School have also received funding from the government for upgrades. I am pleased that \$8.8 million was allocated to Middle Park Primary School, which will deliver much-needed benefits to the community. What is even more exciting is that we will be building Fishermans Bend primary school, which is set to open in 2026 with places for up to 650 students.

In addition to these fantastic contributions from the government, Mac.Robertson Girls' High School is another such school that received funding and has recently completed works. Charlize at Mac.Rob, a work experience student with me this week, told me about how much more comfortable and inviting these spaces are now. Hence the action I seek is for the Minister for Education to visit Mac.Robertson Girls' High School to see the spectacular upgraded facilities from the \$4 million grant to the school in 2020, which has provided better learning environments and more opportunities for young women to pursue their academic dreams.

Mooroolbark–Hull roads, Mooroolbark

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (17:06): (723) The Mooroolbark Road and Hull Road intersection in Mooroolbark under the railway bridge is still dangerous and congested. This is a significant issue for our local community in Mooroolbark, and hundreds and hundreds of residents keep asking why this Labor government fails to allocate any funding to fix this dangerous road. Certainly what the government should be doing is looking for an opportunity to upgrade this road and duplicate Mooroolbark Road well before the housing development at Kinley comes on, with thousands more homes and likely thousands more cars on the road. It is congested now, and it certainly needs addressing and duplicating now. Widening Mooroolbark Road to make it a dual carriageway would actually ease significant congestion. Anyone who travels through there, and lots of people do, knows it is a single-lane bottleneck under the rail bridge at the moment, which causes significant congestion throughout the day, particularly in peak times but also at after-school times.

When I raised this in the Parliament last time – and I have raised this in Parliament many, many times – from adjournment 629 our community was pleased to see that the minister's answer highlighted the need for a project such as the Mooroolbark Road duplication. The minister did agree with me that this would 'significantly improve traffic flow in the area and access to the precinct', and I quote that from the minister's answer. Indeed a reservation is in place which will enable a future widening of Mooroolbark Road between Hull Road and Maroondah Highway.

The action that I seek from the Minister for Roads and Road Safety is that the government allocate sufficient funding for the Mooroolbark Road duplication and in doing so make a new section of the

road so Mooroolbark Road, instead of going under the rail bridge, actually cuts through the south-west corner of the Kinley estate to meet up at a new point on Hull Road near the Supersoil Garden Centre in Mooroolbark. I understand that this would be part of the developer's opportunity to help duplicate that road and ease congestion for commuters in Mooroolbark, and it would completely alleviate the current situation of congestion under the rail bridge. That is the action I seek on behalf of my community, to allocate funds to duplicate Mooroolbark Road down to Hull Road in Mooroolbark.

Syndal South Primary School

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (17:09): (724) My adjournment for this evening is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in our Ashwood electorate for the official opening of the new building at Syndal South Primary School – probably two weeks into term 4, if we can make it then.

John Mullahy interjected.

Matt FREGON: A fantastic school – the member for Glen Waverley knows it well. This is a fantastic upgrade for this fantastic school. As we all know, the Minister for Education announced recently about phonics rolling out for all schools as of next year. Starting next year, all government school students from prep to grade 2 will be taught literacy through a systematic synthetic phonics approach. Syndal South Primary School, that fantastic school that we mentioned, has been running a phonics program for some time. They are very, very, very proud of their work, and so are we of them. I asked principal Helen Freeman – doing an awesome job down there with her staff, mind you – what she thinks about the ongoing phonics program at Syndal South Primary, and here is what she said:

At Syndal South Primary School, we understand how vital it is for students to become fluent readers to support self-esteem and give the highest possibility to develop a love of reading and learning. We use evidence-based methods to ensure all our students succeed and thrive in reading.

The explicit and systematic teaching of fundamental knowledge and skills is at the centre of our approach. We achieve this using the 'Sounds Write' Sustained Systematic Phonics Program, to provide the best possible environment for our students to develop the ability to read, spell and write.

All of our teachers from Foundation to Year 2 have had explicit training in the Sounds Write Program.

We are also currently involved in the AERO/SOLAR Lab Professional Learning program in schools. This is a research project that investigates how to best support educators to implement explicit and systematic reading instruction, through a Structured Literacy approach in the early years (Foundation to Year 2). The research is being carried out by La Trobe University School of Education and Australian Education Research Organisation.

We have followed what the research tells us around literacy instruction and understand Foundation–Year 2 is where the fundamental skills of reading must be embedded which then leads to sustained improvement and growth through to the later years.

Our structured reading and writing approach underpinned by oral language includes –

And there is a list here I will not get time for. Not only is she doing the work that we are putting through next year, she is very proud of it, as we all are, and I commend the Minister for Education for bringing in this program next year across all schools.

Very quickly, I also want to give a big shout-out to Sakina Khambati, our work experience helper from Mac.Rob this week, who put together this adjournment statement. I wish her the best and thank her very much for her work.

Community safety

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (17:12): (725) I wish to raise a matter for the Premier, and the action that I seek is for the Premier to work with the opposition in putting together a working group in a very bipartisan manner with an independent chair that is agreed to by equal amounts of MPs from the government and the opposition to work on combating antisemitism and hate in this place. For far too long we have seen the Jewish community particularly targeted since the events of 7 October, and

unfortunately many of the Jewish community are now feeling very, very unsafe. I cite the member for Macnamara's office being targeted only yesterday in a hateful way.

A number of my colleagues, including the member for Brighton, the member for Mornington and Renee Heath, David Davis and Trung Luu in the other place, went to Israel just recently. Australia and Israel have been friends for a very, very long time. What really, really concerns me is the things that they related to me about what they have heard about the events happening in Victoria – things like 10 November, in which we had people coming to Caulfield and storming outside a synagogue; families of hostages, whom we hosted here in this Parliament, on their way home being unable to go to their hotels, because they were under siege; and thirdly, Mount Scopus, where the words 'die Jew' were on the front of that building. These things are unacceptable and these things need to change, and the only way that we will be able to change them and ensure all people feel safe, particularly the Jewish community at this point in time, is to do it in a bipartisan way.

This is something that we did a few years back in a very, very different scenario, when we looked at ultimately what was a new act of Parliament for the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve. At that time Steve Dimopoulos, the member for Oakleigh, and I worked together with an independent chair, and that resulted in getting that act of Parliament. It was done in the spirit of getting things done in a bipartisan way, and I would ask the Premier to consider doing the same thing. Words are not enough. People need action. Whether it is police powers, ensuring that those haters are held fully to account or ensuring that we get social cohesion and people feeling safe in our community, there are a whole range of things we could do. I suggest we do it with this working group. This is something that should not take months to do. It needs a tight timeframe for reporting back in the spirit of bipartisanship to ultimately get the job done and ensure once again our Jewish community can feel welcome, can feel included and can feel safe in Victoria.

Community safety

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (17:15): (726) My adjournment is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs in the other place, and the action I seek is that the minister update me on our government's \$6 million statewide initiatives to combat Islamophobia and antisemitism. My community is hurting, none more than the thousands upon thousands of Islamic families that call Melbourne's west home. I know this because I speak so often with our people about their grief, their loss, their pain and their suffering over the horrific loss of life in Gaza. To put it simply and to put it in their own words, 'Our hearts are broken.'

As the member for Laverton in Melbourne's west, my job is to support these thousands of families that live within my district. I do that every day with fire in my belly. But more importantly than that, I am a mother, I am a wife, I am a loving daughter and I am a sister, and what I know is this: that human life is sacred. It is fragile, and regardless of race or religion, every life has value. Whether you are Jewish, whether you are Christian or whether you are Muslim, it has meaning, and by God it is precious. One loss of human life is one loss too many. Over 40,000 people have tragically lost their lives since 7 October, and millions have been displaced. The killing must stop. It must stop, and it must stop now.

I want to take this opportunity to reaffirm my support and my love for my Muslim community in the Laverton electorate, many of whom have shared with me their very personal experiences of grief resulting from this conflict, and I join them in supporting an immediate ceasefire and an end to this senseless killing. Over the last eight months I have heard from and I have spoken with so many families in my community. Many of them have a deep personal connection to Palestine. I have heard from folks who have had their entire extended family wiped out in a single night. When I say 'extended family' I mean close to a hundred family members. Can you imagine that – in a single night? There are no words that I can offer to console that sense of loss. Like most of them, I worry about the continuing discord and polarisation that have arisen from this conflict.

There can be no doubt that since October last year there has been a sharp rise in Islamophobia and antisemitism, and neither is acceptable. If we allow these sentiments to fester amongst strongly held opinions, this conflict overseas will tear our community apart. We cannot have this. Here in Victoria it is our diversity, our multiculturalism, that makes this a great state to raise a family. We will always be stronger together, and we must never forget that. We must fight to hold onto that. That is why these Islamophobia and antisemitism programs announced in 2023 are so important to fight back against the harmful attitudes and behaviours that drive us apart.

Great South West Walk

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (17:18): (727) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment. The action I seek is an urgent intervention to expedite the repair of Ralph's Bridge on the iconic Great South West Walk. This vital footbridge, a key element of the Great South West Walk, was damaged by a falling tree in mid-July 2023. Despite the Great South West Walk's national and international significance, which has been recognised in numerous tourism publications including the Lonely Planet's *Epic Hikes of the World*, Australian Geographic's *Australia's Best 100 Walks* and ABC's *Back Roads*, no tangible progress has been made on the footbridge's repair or replacement in almost 12 months. This government's bureaucracy is simply tedious.

The Great South West Walk, established by Portland High School students and their families in the early 1980s, is a major asset for Portland and south-west Victoria. It attracts numerous visitors annually and celebrated recently its 40th anniversary. The Friends of the Great South West Walk, a volunteer group, dedicate around 7000 hours annually to maintaining and promoting the walk and have been instrumental in its upkeep. The time that it is taking for it to be fixed is very frustrating, with local offers of assistance and alternative solutions from volunteers falling on deaf ears.

Since the damage occurred, Parks Victoria have closed the bridge, forcing walkers onto a lengthy and inconvenient 5.5-kilometre detour on public roads. This not only disrupts the experience for visitors but also poses safety risks. Despite the immediate need for repair, the response from the government, who are running this process, has been laughably slow. In August 2023 a Parks Victoria engineer assessed the site and promised a report, yet almost a year later no report has been seen. The government insurance process has been initiated, but it is similarly mired in delays, with assessments and further independent evaluations dragging on for months. It took seven months just for the government to allow the tree to be removed off the broken footbridge.

Right now I am told that Parks Victoria has finally lodged the insurance claim, almost 12 months later. However, the volunteers have been told the process might take years, citing the need for a planning process to assess the site, design a new crossing, consult with stakeholders and undergo a procurement process – all to replace a footbridge that has already been there for the last 40 years. The bureaucratic quagmire is not just frustrating, it is a joke. I therefore urge the minister to intervene and get on with replacing a simple footbridge that has been sitting there for four decades. Immediate action is needed to restore access to this treasured walk and support the volunteers in our community who have tirelessly maintained this asset for decades. This is such a load of rubbish – it is actually like an episode of *Utopia*. Sorry, Speaker, I know you do not like those references.

Merri-bek City Council

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (17:21): (728) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Local Government. What mechanisms and avenues are available to the residents of Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West that ensure Merri-bek city councillors are doing their jobs and making decisions in the best interests of our local community? Merri-bek council, formerly Moreland council, has undertaken commendable work since its creation in 1994 through the provision of community, early childhood, maternal health, library, youth, aged care and many other services. However, it saddens me greatly to report that since being elected I have continued to be inundated with concerns about Merri-bek's directions, priorities, governance and culture under the current Greens, Socialist and radical independent led council. In airing these grievances, however, I want to make it clear that

these issues rest squarely on the shoulders of the elected mayor and councillors, not the hardworking council staff.

As outlined in section 8 of the Victorian Local Government Act 2020:

The role of a Council is to provide good governance in its municipal district for the benefit and wellbeing of the municipal community.

Yet under the current council, the fact is Merri-bek has been progressively letting down local residents, community organisations and businesses, who regularly tell me that as rates have gone up, so too have concerns around the quality of council's responsiveness and eagerness to address local issues. In this respect I draw the Parliament's attention to a number of absurd suggestions and decisions by Merri-bek that have caused major local concerns, including spending millions of ratepayer dollars acquiring land in central Coburg to just land-bank and let it sit there; considering doubling council rates on properties that accommodate businesses, families and renters to supposedly improve housing supply, whilst the Greens sit there and regularly vote against housing projects like the state's Harvest Square big build project in Brunswick West; and campaigning against the Level Crossing Removal Project on the Upfield line in Coburg. If the Greens had their way, there would still be gridlock at Moreland Road and Bell Street. They refuse to listen to the overwhelming calls by local residents in Pascoe Vale to redesign the Kent Road corridor. They did not consult with the St Bernard's parish and school community on the Barrow Street road closure proposal. In an absurd motion recently, a councillor sought to cut ties with Victoria Police whilst explicitly – get this – calling on police protection for their buildings and meetings. Despite the desperate need for women's sporting facilities, the council did not apply for a single state government infrastructure grant in 2022–23 or 2023–24 in my electorate. They happily identified the need for more indoor basketball courts some years ago, but they have not built any – whilst we have been getting on and delivering as a state government by building some at local schools.

They mismanaged waste services in 2022 and 2023, leaving many locals with uncollected bins for days on end each week. They regularly fail to rectify many local neighbourhood issues, including the landslide that occurred at the corner of Reynard Street and Mitchell Parade in September 2022 and the landslide at Greenbank Crescent in April 2023, both of which are yet to be rectified, with council's latest advice suggesting they will be repaired in six to 12 months time. That is around two years after the original incidents occurred. How is that good governance?

Residents have told me they expect council to be focused on bringing people together to address these and many other local issues before council seeks to engage on issues of international, national and indeed state significance. But they also paint a picture as to why Merri-bek has sadly, on a yearly basis since 2016, recorded some of the lowest local government community satisfaction survey results across Victoria. Local households and families expect the mayor and councillors of Merri-bek to focus on core business.

Yarra Boulevard

Jess WILSON (Kew) (17:24): (729) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I am seeking is improved community engagement on behalf of VicRoads with local residents about Yarra Boulevard. The boulevard is a unique road that runs alongside the Yarra River, and by day it is popular with cyclists and tourists alike who use it to get to the riverside walking trails and the newly refurbished Studley Park Boathouse. Unfortunately, by night the boulevard is a favoured spot for hooners who engage in dangerous speeding and antisocial behaviour. There have been multiple crashes and fatalities along Yarra Boulevard over the last decade, and locals will tell you there have been too many near misses to count, all caused by speeding motorists. Residents also tell me that overnight noise pollution caused by hooning on the Yarra Boulevard is impacting their ability to get a good night's sleep and hence their overall wellbeing.

A key objective of the recent funding to upgrade Yarra Boulevard has been to improve safety along the road. It is clear that despite the measures taken to date by VicRoads, hooning continues to be a major problem. Boroondara police have been patrolling the area when resources allow and last month impounded the vehicle of a probationary licence holder for doing a burnout on Yarra Boulevard. I thank Boroondara police for their commitment to community safety in our area, but I note they cannot maintain a presence on Yarra Boulevard every single night.

Crime statistics in Boroondara show an alarming spike in a number of different categories, meaning our local police have their hands full at the best of times. They cannot be everywhere all at once. Residents will tell you that a few nights after the infringement was issued the hoons were at it again. It is clear that a more permanent solution must be found. Those who are responsible for making decisions about future safety measures on Yarra Boulevard must take the time to listen to residents who are most affected by the ongoing disturbances. Their message is very clear: what you are doing is not working. Before any more money is spent, VicRoads needs to meet face to face with the residents and hear firsthand about how measures taken to date are not delivering safety improvements. We cannot keep spending taxpayer money for little or no safety impact nor any traffic improvement or reduction in hooning behaviour. I ask the minister to make a representative of VicRoads available to urgently attend a community forum on safety measures at Yarra Boulevard.

Northcote electorate train lines

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (17:26): (730) My adjournment is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport. I ask the minister to arrange a briefing between me and the Department of Transport and Planning regarding timetabling and train frequency on the Mernda and Hurstbridge lines, which run through my electorate of Northcote. The inner north is thankful to be serviced by these two train lines, which connect residents to work, education and recreation. They are very important to our daily lives, particularly as our inner-urban population increases. Over recent years we have also been pleased to see an unprecedented transformation of the network under the leadership of the Victorian Labor government. Locally this includes an outbound extension of the Mernda line and a track duplication of the Hurstbridge line, both substantially increasing capacity. We have also seen the removal of the Grange Road level crossing in Alphington and four level crossings in Preston, with brand new stations built at Bell and Preston. Together these removals have made a tremendous difference in traffic flow and safety, and we are looking forward to the completion of the Metro Tunnel as a crucial enabler for the truly modern network we need.

As we continue to invest in and drive large-scale infrastructure improvements, I am conscious that the system still suffers from current capacity and timetabling issues which impact residents. Commuters have spoken to me about their frustrations and aspirations in respect of both lines. On the Hurstbridge line there are concerns around wait times between trains during peak hour and a real desire to see the Hurstbridge express trains stop at Fairfield station, given its location at a major retail precinct and in a suburb set to densify. On the Mernda line commuters have told me about the impact of long scheduling gaps, particularly on Sunday mornings, that can reach up to 40 minutes. You do not want to miss your train on those mornings.

My community understands that the train network has pressure points and that simply shoving more trains onto the tracks is problematic without actually building in capacity that we need to alleviate those pressure points. That is why our level crossing removals and line duplications are so important. Boom gates shut busy roads for up to 40 seconds in every minute during peak times. Getting rid of them means more trains can run as congestion points are alleviated. Similarly, by having two tracks, trains can pass each other to reduce congestion and increase reliability. It is also worth mentioning that we have a big pinch point at the Clifton Hill junction, where Hurstbridge and Mernda converge, so that will ultimately need to be addressed to improve capacity. I mention these things because as a community on the doorstep of the CBD, Northcote will increasingly rely on public transport as its population increases. I look forward to discussing the current train timetabling and the long-term plan for building capacity and enabling more frequency on our lines.

Responses

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (17:29): The member for Murray Plains raised an action for the attention of the Minister for Police, and the action he seeks is that the minister work to resolve an issue of community safety in Echuca. The member for Albert Park raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, and the action she seeks is that the minister visit Mac.Robertson Girls' High School with her. The member for Evelyn raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action that she seeks is a duplication of Mooroolbark Road. The member for Ashwood raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, and the action that he sought is that the minister join him at Syndal South Primary School for its grand opening. The member for Caulfield raised a matter for the attention of the Premier, and the action the member sought is that the Premier work to establish a bipartisan committee to combat antisemitism. The member for Laverton raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Multicultural Affairs in the other place, and the action that the member sought is an update on work that is underway to combat antisemitism and Islamophobia in the state.

The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, and the action she seeks is that Ralph's footbridge on the iconic Great South West Walk be fixed as soon as possible. The member for Pascoe Vale raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government, and the action that he seeks is that he be advised on what mechanisms and avenues are available to the local residents of Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West to ensure that Merri-bek city councillors are doing their job and making decisions in the best interests of his local community. The member for Kew raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action she sought is that a representative from VicRoads meet with members of her community about their concerns. The member for Northcote raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and the action that she seeks is that she have a briefing from the department regarding train frequency servicing the needs of her local community.

The SPEAKER: Could I just take a quick moment to thank our clerks, attendants and parliamentary staff for their work and support. I hope they enjoy some time away from members of Parliament. The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 5:32 pm.