



# **Hansard**

## **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

### **60th Parliament**

**Tuesday 27 August 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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel <sup>1</sup>	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 <sup>2</sup>	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 <sup>5</sup>	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Famham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden <sup>3</sup>	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will <sup>4</sup>	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 <sup>6</sup>	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

<sup>1</sup> Resigned 27 September 2023

<sup>2</sup> ALP until 29 April 2024

<sup>3</sup> Sworn in 6 February 2024

<sup>4</sup> ALP until 5 August 2023

<sup>5</sup> Resigned 7 July 2023

<sup>6</sup> 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

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**Tuesday 27 August 2024**

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

***Bills***

**Short Stay Levy Bill 2024**

***Introduction and first reading***

**Danny PEARSON** (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (12:05): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to impose a levy in relation to the provision of short-stay accommodation, to amend the Owners Corporations Act 2006 and the Taxation Administration Act 1997 and for other purposes.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (12:05): I request of the Assistant Treasurer a short explanation of the bill.

**Danny PEARSON** (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (12:05): The bill will deliver on the government's commitment made as part of the housing statement to introduce a 7.5 per cent levy on short-stay accommodation bookings from 1 January 2025. The levy will boost supply of long-term rentals and provide funds which will be used for social and affordable housing.

**Read first time.**

**Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.**

***Business of the house***

**Notices of motion and orders of the day**

**The SPEAKER** (12:06): General business, notices of motion 22 to 27 and orders of the day 1, 4 and 5, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matters to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 5 pm today.

***Committees***

**Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee**

***Alert Digest No. 11***

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (12:07): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 11 of 2024, on the following bills:

Government Construction Projects Integrity Bill 2024

Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2024

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

Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

State Civil Liability (Police Informants) Bill 2024

Youth Justice Bill 2024

Youth Justice Bill 2024 – house amendments

together with appendices.

**Ordered to be published.**

*Documents***Documents****Incorporated list as follows:****DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT** – The Clerk tabled:

Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, Board of – Chair report 2022–23

*Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984* – Notice under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule 55 (Gazette G33, 15 August 2024)

*Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* – Register of Interests – Returns submitted by Members of the Legislative Assembly – Ordinary returns 1 February to 30 June 2024 (two volumes) – Ordered to be published

Ombudsman – Annual Plan 2024–25 – Ordered to be published

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

East Gippsland – C168

Greater Geelong – C471

Latrobe – C142

Melbourne – C438

Port of Melbourne – C6

South Gippsland – C119

Victoria Planning Provisions – VC262

Yarra – C286

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

*Health Services Act 1988* – SR 77

*Magistrates' Court Act 1989* – SR 74

*National Parks Act 1975* – SR 76

*Sale of Land Act 1962* – SR 75

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79

Documents under s 16B in relation to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* – Ministerial Order No 1452 – Fees for Services Provided to Children in Government Early Learning Centres

Victorian Information Commissioner, Office of (OVIC) – Public Interest Determination under the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*

**DOCUMENT TABLED UNDER A RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE** – The Clerk tabled the following document:

Parliamentary Integrity Adviser – Report 2023–24.

*Bills***Youth Justice Bill 2024***Council's amendments*

**The SPEAKER** (12:09): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Youth Justice Bill 2024 with amendments.

**Ordered that amendments be taken into consideration later this day.**



**Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Bill 2024****State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024***Royal assent*

**The SPEAKER** (12:09): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Bill 2024 and the State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

**Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2024****Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024***Appropriation*

**The SPEAKER** (12:09): I have received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2024 and the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

*Business of the house***Victorian Auditor-General's Office***Financial audit*

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:10): I move, by leave:

That:

- (1) Under section 79 of the Audit Act 1994, Andrew Wehrens of Nexia Melbourne Audit be appointed for a period of four years:
  - (a) to conduct the financial audits of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office for the financial years 2024–25 to 2027–28;
  - (b) in accordance with the terms, conditions and specifications set out in the request for tender issued on 11 June 2024; and
  - (c) at the fixed fees of:
    - (i) \$40,000 (plus GST) for audit services for the year ending 30 June 2025
    - (ii) \$41,000 (plus GST) for audit services for the year ending 30 June 2026
    - (iii) \$42,000 (plus GST) for audit services for the year ending 30 June 2027
    - (iv) \$43,000 (plus GST) for audit services for the year ending 30 June 2028.
- (2) A message be sent to the Legislative Council requesting their agreement.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Program**

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:11): It is a pleasure to rise today to commend the Allan Labor government's business program to the house. There is plenty to talk about this week. I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on 29 August 2024:

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024

Residential Tenancies and Funerals Amendment Bill 2024

Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2024.

As I was saying, it is a pleasure to be here with the Allan Labor government's government business program for this week. I might start at the end, because I am pleased that one of my bills is going to

be debated, the Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2024. This bill comes off a long body of work that started under one of my predecessors the Honourable Jill Hennessy MP, former Minister for Health. There was the Gorton review, a very important review into the way in which IVF and other assisted reproductive technologies are regulated here in Victoria. The health legislation amendment bill looks at that as well as a whole range of other regulatory functions in order to ensure that we look to have a modern, contemporary regulatory framework for health regulation in this state. I know that many members on this side of the house will look forward to speaking on that bill.

We will also be discussing the Residential Tenancies and Funerals Amendment Bill 2024. This builds on our government's commitment to providing more transparency for Victorian consumers, and it builds on our commitment to rental reform no matter where Victorians live. Our government has already initiated a whole range of reforms to ensure that people who rent – an increasing proportion of the population – have the necessary protections in place. These include a ban on rental bidding, new minimum rental standards, no eviction without reason and provisions around urgent repairs.

Many of these reforms were initiated in 2021. They build upon successive bills and pieces of work. This is what this bill aims to do. I know again that this is something that members on this side of the house have long advocated for. The bill particularly looks to improve standards for people who live in residential parks. I have a residential park in my electorate, and I have always been concerned that people that live in these accommodations do not understand the rights that they have or indeed do not have, but we are here to strengthen those and look after what is a particularly vulnerable group of our population.

We are also looking of course to debate the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill. The changes in this bill have been requested by the trust itself, and they make important governance changes to the Melbourne convention centre and the Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre, which are critical to the state's reputation as a host of major events.

I might point out that you can only make changes to the governance of the Geelong Convention and Event Centre if you actually build a Geelong Convention and Event Centre, and that is exactly what our government has done. Indeed as the former Minister for Regional Development it was wonderful to be able to play a small part in the development of this magnificent facility. I know because the whole of our party room was abuzz about the great success of the multicultural dinner, which was held for the first time in Geelong, and on this side of the house we are very proud to represent the entirety of Geelong and surrounding communities. We have done that for a long time, and it is something that we intend to keep doing. It is through bills like this that we will deliver for the people of Geelong, deliver for the tourism and convention industry more broadly and ensure that Victoria remains, as it is right now, the major events capital of Australia.

This is a really good government business program. I look forward to the many contributions from this side of this house, and I commend the program to the house.

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:16): The coalition will be opposing the government business program. I will tell you why. The government business program has become a joke. It has become an absolute joke. Whatever is written on the program will bear no resemblance to what the government actually deals with in a week. We saw only last week the government rush through an urgent bill that came into the chamber – ‘We have to get this bill through today. We have to introduce this bill, get it through the lower house and through the Council on Thursday’ – until the government voted against bringing their own bill on on Thursday in the Council. They voted against bringing their own bill on despite saying it was a matter of extreme urgency. What an outrage. It just shows how fake the government are and how their government business program is a complete waste of paper.

What we also know is that the government this morning gave notice that the house would be dealing with the Youth Justice Bill 2024 Council amendments first up today. Well, we skipped over that, didn't we? What happened to that? What happened to the government's own notice paper for today? Again,

chaos. We have skipped over it. I am not sure whether the Leader of the House forgot or whether the government was embarrassed by the youth crime crisis that is actually occurring on our streets. I tell you what, it is happening on Church Street in Brighton. We saw that on Friday. There was a knife fight on Church Street in Brighton – a full Church Street, kids going up and down the street – and chairs were being thrown and bottles were being thrown at 3:45 in the afternoon. It is no wonder, is it, that the government has skipped over dealing with the Council amendments on that bill, because they are embarrassed. We might see that item come back to the chamber today. How would we know? All we have to rely on is the daily program, where it is listed, and it was skipped, just like the government business program last week. We had a business program written down in black and white, but it bore no resemblance to what was actually dealt with in the week.

When it comes to the Parliament the government is in chaos. In both chambers the government is in chaos, because the government tries to push the items it wants through the Parliament, and then they sit in the upper house until it can trade away and do a deal with the crossbench and get enough votes to get them through that place. They bring these items through the lower house and call for urgency, call for immediacy, in terms of getting these bills through. Then they sit there in the upper house waiting for the horsetrading to occur, waiting for members' votes to be bought off until there are enough votes for the government to get their bad legislation through the Council. It is obvious for the world to see. That is why the coalition will be opposing the government business program.

I do note the government has given notice again – and here I am standing up for the Labor members again – of dealing with the budget motion. Last week we saw the government allow 1 hour of debate on the budget motion – the embarrassing budget that the government wants to hide. No wonder they want to hide it. Every single week the government lists and will allow debate on the budget motion, and yet there are some 20 members on the government benches who have not had a chance to speak on it and about a third on our side who have not had a chance to speak on it. We know what we want to say. We want to say that we have been neglected. We want to talk about the fact that we have been neglected and our communities have been forgotten year on year on year. But for the government to ignore their own backbench – no wonder the Premier is wandering around the room shoring up her numbers. It is because the members are being neglected by their own government in the Parliament.

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, a contribution on the government business program is not an opportunity to sledge the government.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Brighton will come back to the business program.

**James NEWBURY:** The truth hurts.

**Tim RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (12:21): It is great to rise on the government business program and to follow my bayside colleague, the member for Brighton, who gave a stirring rendition of how to get excited about the opposition opposing the government business program. I thought the member for Brighton might come in and it might be a little bit refreshing to see the opposition support the business program.

I also feel a little bit cheated this afternoon. On the government business program we have three really important bills, and I will talk to their importance and why the timing of those coming forward is really important. I was disappointed because I came in for chamber duty – I am here until 1 – and I thought, 'There's got to be some notices of motion; there's got to be some bills introduced.' I was going, 'We probably won't get to this bill until 2 or 3 o'clock.' I came in, and have people missed the memo? Where are all the notices of motion? Where are the bills being introduced? It has just been a bit docile. I was just hoping for a bit of a pulse. Maybe they just missed it on the program. I was waiting for the endless – I think last time it was 80 – notices of motion. I thought, 'Could they just crack the ton?' We are coming out of footy season and into cricket. They all sounded a little bit similar. They all sort of seemed centrally produced – a bit like carbon copies and just off they go. And it is the job of opposition,

obviously; you see them oppose once again. But this is an opportunity to speak on these important bills.

The Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2024 has had a long journey to this point around reproductive care and treatment. I think everyone in this place has an important connection and knows someone who is impacted and will benefit, so I think that is a really important bill to come forward. I would have liked a little bit of commentary from the member for Brighton on some of the bills – to say, ‘Well, this is important for our team. We want to talk about this today, and we want to put this on the record.’ This is something government members will be really keen to speak on. The list is as long as the day of people coming forward to make a contribution on that.

We know the opportunities for these bills to come forward are really important. You set them on the program and give members an opportunity on behalf of their communities to speak to them. We know how important some of the residential tenancy work is. The funerals area is interesting. I did, as Parliamentary Secretary for Health Infrastructure, support the Minister for Health in some of that work previously. With the tenancies part of that and the huge, storied reform that has gone on, there is another opportunity for members of Parliament to reflect on some of that reform. It is a really important bill to be on the government business program and to reflect on.

Of course the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024 is on a really important strategic asset for Victorians, so that bill coming forward is another important thing, with the changes and impacts that the trusts are making on behalf of Melburnians and Victorians for what is an internationally renowned precinct, affectionately known as Jeff’s Shed. Time and time again it has events and events – over and over and over.

I feel a little cheated. I thought there was a chance today for multipartisanship. When the member for Brighton got up to make a contribution, my heart was racing with expectation. Then we got the same old drollery, the same old attacks and the same old theme. But the legislative program is pretty predictable. How can putting these bills on the record, that are pretty consistent, pretty aspirational and pretty inspiring, suddenly be government out of control? If you are Henny Penny and the sky is falling every other day, then people think you are a bit out of control. I just think, member for Brighton, maybe mix it up a little bit. Maybe do the faux outrage that you do so well – you have got a bit of a trademark in that – then maybe try and do the multipartisan statesperson-type gig. Maybe we could see a little bit more of that. The member for Sandringham does that really well. He does the gravitas and then the reach across the chamber.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member will come back to the government business program.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** I was waiting, Speaker, for a point of order, but I think they are happy with the running commentary we are doing. But it is an important opportunity. There is an important thing, because we hear a number of those opposite complain about how much time they get to speak on the government business program. There is an opportunity this week where there are a number of bills. We will be looking at the program. We will be seeing the contributions. There are numbers of hours available. We have heard the commentary from those opposite around how much time or how much work is dedicated to this. We will be watching closely how those speaking lists look and the contributions that are made. Some have been wanting. They have been attending, but they might as well have not attended the precinct as they are speaking so little. We are looking now to see those contributions on a really packed government business program.

**Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (12:27):** I rise to talk on the government business program today. As the member for Brighton says, we will be opposing the government business program even though we will be pleased to stand up and talk about the Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2024, which the previous member just spoke about. Then I need to go back. I am sure the constituents down in the Latrobe Valley – who will be huddled in the coffee shops reading through

how we are going to have to stand up and talk about the Melbourne Convention Centre and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024 – are probably standing there and they have got their coffees and they are thinking, ‘Well, how is that going to affect me moving forward with my local member having to stand up?’ And I will stand up and talk on it, because that is the role when we come down here. The government business program is put down and I will stand up and talk. They will be wanting me to talk on other things that are on the business program that we could be talking about.

One of those things is the Youth Justice Bill 2024, which I thought that we would have been talking on this morning. It should have been straight up, because it affects the people in my community. They are a part of the Youth Justice Bill reforms, which we spoke about last sitting week or the sitting week before, because of the Gordon family. Their son Dr Ash Gordon was tragically killed in Box Hill. There are other members in the chamber who have had members of their communities affected by the Youth Justice Bill and the bail laws. I think that we should have been up-front, put that straight up and moved on with that so we could pass those reforms and make sure that we are doing something tangible for the community right across Victoria. It is very, very important that we do get this done. To have it first up and then bump it down the pecking order – I just hope that we do have the opportunity to stand up and relay what is going on out in the community around Victoria, not only in the CBD, the city, but also in regional Victoria.

Now to another one, the Residential Tenancies and Funeral Amendment Bill 2024, which we are going to do. There might be some members in here that will be really excited to talk about that one. I am looking forward to being able to talk about that because the residential tenancies of people that are living in caravan parks in permanent homes which they own do have their issues. It would be great to be able to tick off on that to give them a little bit more security about where things lie going into the future.

We do need to talk about the business program and do the day-to-day business of dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s, but there is a lot more important stuff that every single Victorian who resides here needs us to be talking about. As I said, the justice bail bill is one. When I go back to my community, they are talking about health, and we do have a health bill here. They are talking about energy, they are talking about the cost of living, they are talking about roads, and these are things that we can have on the business program, that we can get our teeth into and make sure that we are representing our communities to the best of our ability as their local MPs. That is my role: to come in and do that.

As the member for Brighton articulated earlier, we will be opposing the motion on these grounds. There are other more urgent things that we could be spending our time in this chamber talking on that are actually going to make a difference to people’s lives in Victoria. We do not want to hide behind the business program. We want to make sure that we debate the hard stuff that we need to have conversations about. It may not be to the liking of members on the other side, but bring them on so we can discuss them, because we are doing this for every single Victorian who is living in regional Victoria and also metropolitan Melbourne. It may not be the nice conversation they want to have, but these conversations are needed. As the member for Brighton said before, the business program has been very, very light on. Let us bring on the stuff that people in Victoria want us to talk about. Bring it to the fore, let us stand up in the chamber and have the debate for the people of Victoria. That is why we will be opposing the business program this week.

**Pauline RICHARDS** (Cranbourne) (12:31): I am very much looking forward to this government business program debate through the course of the week. I mean, I am shocked really. I am just shocked that the opposition is opposing the government business program. In fact what I am most shocked about is the lack of heckling for my good friend here the member for Mordialloc. We have a great government business program, but it feels a little bit like groundhog day or one of those terrible dreams where you wake up and you think you have missed the bus going to school. I must have felt like I had been here before because I do feel the outrage of those opposite in opposing the government business program is confected. We have some terrific legislation that we will be debating.

I did have a look to see how much work we have been doing because, gosh, there has been a lot going on, and I noticed that in the last few months alone, since the budget in fact, we have been working hard to pass – and I checked – more than 12 pieces of legislation, legislation that we have been able to pass and continue to pass as we get on with the incredibly important and hard work of debating and contributing on legislation. Just in the last few months we have passed legislation relating to First Nations people, justice reforms, policing improvements, environmental legislation and so much more. But of course we are not stopping there. We heard the Leader of the House acknowledge that there is some important legislation that has been quite a while in development, and that is why it is so important that we bring this legislation here this week.

I was going to say we have got legislation from the cradle to the grave. We have got really important health legislation about artificial insemination and we have important legislation that ensures that people are able to access funeral arrangements and get a fair deal when they are making arrangements at a time in people's lives that can be incredibly stressful. We also have the important Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024, so other important legislation to debate.

I have to disagree with my friend the member for Morwell that these are not pieces of legislation that are needed by our community. This is important legislation that people want us to bring forward. I did think, in the context particularly of the health legislation that the Leader of the House in her capacity as Minister for Health will be bringing forward, of the Democratic convention I was listening to last week. I heard Coach Walz talk about the importance of being able to form a family in whatever way is possible and making sure that these types of regulations are in place and apply in a way that is fair and reasonable.

I am very much looking forward to hearing the debate from both sides, because I know that these types of issues are important to everyone in the Victorian community. I am particularly conscious of people in regional Victoria and people in rural Victoria and the outer suburbs and all the way through the middle-ring suburbs being able to access the type of health care they need at a time and a place that is close to home, and this legislation is important legislation to ensure that fairness and equity.

I am hoping that there is no sort of affected walkout this week. That would be disappointing. As the member for Mordialloc pointed out, I do not know where they go from the walkout, because I am not sure what is next. But there will be of course not just important debates on legislation but also opportunities for people to be able to contribute by asking questions and bringing forward matters for action by ministers to bring forward the important services and outcomes that are at the centre of our community.

I am very pleased to be able to contribute to this government business program. I am particularly looking forward to debate on the health legislation. I am always wanting to hear what people have to say about bringing fairness and equity, especially as it relates to funeral services and residential parks. I commend the business program, and I am looking forward to being able to stand up one day and congratulate those opposite on working in a more collaborative way. That will be a terrific day. I think I will be having a cup of tea to celebrate. In the meantime, let us get on with this important reform. There is a lot to get done, and we will be getting it done this week.

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (12:36): I too rise to oppose the government business program and support the Manager of Opposition Business's comments that this is an absolute joke. Here we have a community where Victorians are trying to say to the Allan Labor government that we are in trouble as a state. We have got a cost-of-living crisis, and today we see another tax introduced into the Parliament. There have been 55 increased charges or taxes. We have got a health crisis. We have got a homelessness situation. We need to build more houses, and the government are putting more and more taxes in place to prevent people from being able to get a roof over their head. Here we have a government business program that completely ignores what the Victorian community are saying to the Labor government – that they should raise and address these issues and use the Parliament's time to do so. We even saw last week the government introducing an urgent bill. This is

such a chaotic government that in last week's government business program they introduced an urgent bill, and then they pulled it. This is just so chaotic, and Victoria is certainly seeing it.

We heard the member for Cranbourne talk about rural Victorians. Well, if you were listening to rural Victorians, you would know the roads are in an incredibly bad state and they need urgent attention. You would know there is a teacher exodus and that the families and South-West Coast and all across rural Victoria need the government to back in their teachers, back in the police, back in the nurses and back in the professionals, like the ambulance officers, who are doing their best in rural Victoria. But this is a government who puts a business program out that has issues that certainly need addressing but not in this urgent way, unlike some of these things that I have just raised, like the increased cost-of-living pressures on families, who cannot get a childcare placement to be able to get back to work so that they can actually meet their mortgage repayments and meet their grocery bills and meet the ability to open up their energy bill and not absolutely fall over with fright about how high it has got since they last got their energy bill. This is a government that continually says it is bringing down the price of energy and bringing down the price of the cost of living, but quite the opposite. That is where this government business program falls down, because Victorians want to see a government that is focused on families, on outcomes and on results.

Today we were supposed to have in the government business program – and we saw it in the daily program – the Youth Justice Bill 2024 coming back from the upper house first thing. That was the plan, but again the chaos that is reigning in this place is demonstrated right here and now, because where is this Youth Justice Bill with its amendments? We have weaker bail laws than we had in March. These amendments are not doing what needs to be done and actually strengthening the crime laws and the bail laws so that we have less crime. Quite the opposite: the government is not giving direction and is not giving the message that there are boundaries and there are consequences. It is the exact opposite, and that is why we are seeing youth crime exploding and Victorians feeling very unsafe in their own homes.

We see in this government business program the Residential Tenancies and Funerals Amendment Bill 2024, which puts some security around people living in caravan parks in permanent dwellings. We have 10,000 people living in caravan parks, and that is predicted to double because there are not enough houses being built. The government's own targets of 80,000 homes per annum – 800,000 over the next decade – they have pulled back. This is the chaos of this government. And last year we did not even see 55,000 homes being built right across Victoria. So of course we are going to see more people needing assistance and having to live in caravan parks instead of being able to get a roof over their own head.

This is the chaos of a government that is clearly unravelling, and Victorians see it. We saw it last week at the rally in Bendigo, where the Premier herself was trying to convince regional Victorians that she is doing things for regional Victoria. But every person, I am sure, who went to that rally went on a road and would absolutely know –

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On a point of order, Speaker, the member for South-West Coast knows that the contribution on the government business program is not an opportunity to attack the government.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for South-West Coast will come back to the government business program.

**Roma BRITNELL:** Yes, I am not surprised you stopped me when I talked about the rally and how abused the Premier got, because Victorians are –

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Assembly divided on motion:**

*Ayes (53):* Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily

D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, 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, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Members statements*

#### **Glen Iris planning**

**Michael O'BRIEN** (Malvern) (12:47): Glen Iris residents in my electorate welcome sensible and sensitive development, but they rightly oppose high-rise, high-density inappropriate overdevelopment, and that is exactly what Woolworths is proposing for 173 Burke Road, Glen Iris. This site is less than 500 metres from three schools, being Sacre Coeur, Korowa and the Caulfield Grammar junior campus. It is next to a busy medical centre and a local shopping strip. It is absolutely the wrong site for a large supermarket and multistorey apartment complex, because the traffic impacts will be horrendous. The Burke Road level crossing removal, which was funded by the last Liberal government, hugely improved traffic flows in this area, but these gains will be lost if Woolies gets its way. This proposal was rejected by Stonnington council. It was even rejected by VCAT, and now Woolworths wants the Labor planning minister to rubberstamp what has already been found to be inappropriate overdevelopment. The proposal does not even contain the 10 per cent affordable housing component required by Labor's development facilitation program, so it should be rejected.

This is a huge test for the Allan Labor government. Will it respect the views of local residents, small businesses, council and VCAT, who have all said this proposal is wrong, or will it give big business what it wants at the expense of everybody else? Victorians are watching, Minister. I urge you to do the right thing and reject this proposal.

#### **Doreen Scouts**

**Lauren KATHAGE** (Yan Yean) (12:49): The Scouts are prepared, and I heard all about it at the Doreen Scout group last night at their annual reports, awards and presentations evening, where I was really pleased to present them with a certificate from the Minister for Youth, who is also really proud of the work that they do. Thank you to Bec Reichelt, Samantha Boyle and Sharon Noyle for their fantastic work, along with all the others, in organising last night. It was a great event, and I just want to give a shout-out to some of the award winners: in the Joeys, Gurnadur Kaur for the personal growth award, and Goyumi Manannalage and Charlotte Boyle for the Joeys Scout challenge award. In the Cubs, Will Sykes was really honoured to receive the personal growth award. He has really come out of his shell. Good on you, Will. Manuka Manannalage – a family effort there – and Lachlan Clark received the grey wolf award. They were the Cubs. For the Scouts, Rose Talbot received the personal growth award and Thomas Steward the Australian Scout Award. Well done to Charlie Edwards, a Venturer, who received a personal growth award, and Natalie Garro, a Rover, who received the same award. And well done to Jake Norris, Angelo Garro and Maddie Thompson for their adult recognition awards. We cannot do it without those adult volunteers, and I thank them so much for what they give to my community.



### Strathbogie Shire Business Awards

**Annabelle CLEELAND** (Euroa) (12:50): I want to congratulate all the local businesses and organisations recognised at the Strathbogie Shire Business Awards on Friday. The event was made possible by the Euroa Chamber of Business and Commerce and Go Nagambie, who together organised an incredible evening at Fowles winery in Avenel. Special thanks to Steph Swift and Belinda Beer, the presidents of these two groups, for their continued dedication and support for local businesses. They are steadfast in protecting, supporting and encouraging growth in our region – a region that has endured COVID lockdowns, floods, extreme power outages and a labour shortage. Thanks to their efforts our towns have become places that people want to visit and, even more, move to. From splash parks to accommodation, wineries, restaurants, cafes and the efforts of local volunteers, all the nominees offer something crucial to our region. Mitchelton Wines received the Tourism Excellence award, with Euroa Caravan Park also commended. Waterways Lifestyle Village won the Large Business award, followed by Mawson's Bakery in Euroa. The Small Business award went to Eighteen Sixty and Next Door. Bernie, your coffee, toasties and meals are outstanding. Traci Stumer of NAB Nagambie won the Employee Recognition award for a job she loves, and GMCU Euroa received the Service Excellence award. Adam Walker of Euroa SES was recognised with the Youth Recognition award, and Avenel Equine Hospital won the Excellence in Agriculture award. I look forward to seeing our towns continue to grow, our businesses continue to thrive and visitors enjoying the best of what our region has to offer.

### Melton electorate events

**Steve McGHIE** (Melton) (12:52): The past two weeks have been a whirlwind of events. Welcoming Minister Erdogan to the new African Youth Initiative office was a highlight, showcasing AYT's impactful work in creating safe spaces for Victorian African youth. AYT's latest accomplishment, the *Reclaimed Voices* film, is nothing short of extraordinary. The minister and I had the honour of viewing a snippet of this film, and its significance cannot be overstated. The film is a powerful platform for Victoria's African community to share their experiences and struggles, reclaiming their narrative in their own words. It is a must-watch for everyone in the broader Victorian community. I commend all those involved in bringing this project to life and congratulate AYI on their achievements.

It was also a pleasure to reconnect with the dedicated team at the Centre for Multicultural Youth alongside the minister as we discussed their vital work with the South Sudanese community, hearing directly from their new lived-experience mentors. It was empowering to hear the impactful ways they are helping re-engage those who have felt disconnected from society, fostering a renewed sense of purpose and connection.

As Melton continues to be the fastest growing municipality, with more families choosing it as their home, the need for parks and open spaces has never been greater. We officially opened the Black Knight Way Reserve and saw the impressive, accessible and adventurous play equipment designed to inspire fun and discovery. I even had a chance to try out the flying fox – it held my weight, unbelievably – which definitely delivers the fun factor.

The Edmund Rice community program wrapped up an incredible initiative designed to promote safer communities. I congratulate them.

And last Friday I went down to Binap Primary School.

### Elwood Toy Library

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:53): The Elwood Toy Library makes a big impact on our community. Last year they joined 264 families as members, facilitated 15,160 hours of play and saved the average family \$1914 on toys. Thank you to the families who contributed 800 volunteer hours to run the library, and a big thankyou to coordinator Simon Hall and the whole committee of management.

**Brighton Hebrew Congregation**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:54): The Brighton Hebrew Congregation welcomed me for Shabbat recently. Together we spoke about the deep antisemitism that exists and the need for Western countries like Australia to stop extremists from coming to our shores. Only hours after my visit, Hezbollah terrorists were firing hundreds of rockets into Israel. Thank you to rabbi Alex Tsykin and president David Wittenberg for your leadership of the shul.

**William Charles Almeida**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:54): This year will mark the centenary of the death of Orlando Street commercial bank teller William Charles Almeida. The 22-year-old was killed by two of Squizzy Taylor's gang when they robbed the bank. Despite being shot, William held one of the robbers, Francis Perkins. The other, Douglas Robertson, was later arrested in Sydney. A publicly erected water fountain commemorates Almeida in Triangle Gardens in Hampton.

**Brighton electorate crime**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:54): Ram raids, swarm shoplifting and knife fights are happening every week in Church Street, Brighton. Last week just after school pick-up a knife fight started. Signage was being used as shields, chairs were thrown and glass bottles were being used as projectiles. Church Street traders are sick of the attacks, and Brighton residents are tired of this Labor government ignoring these crimes.

**Broadmeadows electorate education funding**

**Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD** (Broadmeadows) (12:55): There is lots to celebrate in education locally, from our littlest learners to our seniors studying digital essentials. Over tea and homemade cake I heard from local seniors about what works for them and how much they enjoy getting together every week at the wonderful Glenroy Neighbourhood House.

I had the pleasure of visiting Glenroy West Kindergarten with the Minister for Children to announce funding to double their size. On Friday we were together again. We were treated to an incredible singing performance by the Roo Club at the Coolaroo South Primary School children's round table. We also got to see their amazing community hub and newly funded toy library. Community hubs are awesome, and I had the pleasure of seeing another in action at Holy Child when I visited for the magical Book Week parade. At Broadmeadows Primary I was peppered with insightful questions from curious kids as we spoke about the different levels of government and my role as their state representative.

On Thursday, at Glenroy College's vocational major expo, I got to hear about the day that changed Cloe's life when she did a hands-on career day with Northern Plumbing Solutions and decided to swap her school-based apprenticeship from beauty to plumbing. She could not be happier. I thank her and the other kids who shared their stories of finding their paths and highlighted their achievements and success. It was great to see work progressing on the oval revamp too.

Speaking of revamps, what a joy it was to open the new \$10 million Yaluk building at Jacana School for Autism. I cannot wait to go back for their concert in a few weeks. I loved visiting Hume Valley School for the beautiful Koori totem pole installation. In Broadmeadows the excitement builds as we see the outstanding new \$60 million health and community services centre of excellence at Kangan Institute nearing completion.

**Refugees and asylum seekers**

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (12:56): Imagine being 19 years old and you have got a good VCE score but you are not allowed to go to uni or to get a job. On the Friday before last I spoke at the refugee encampment outside the Department of Home Affairs in Docklands to an understandably frustrated group of refugees who fled repressive regimes and violence in places like Sri Lanka and Iran and came

here by boat around 12 years ago. They have been left in limbo on bridging visas, often without rights to study or work or to access Medicare. Thousands of people seeking asylum had their claims rejected under a flawed system created by the federal Liberal government, but having abolished the system, federal Labor are still not giving them a chance. I met a young woman earlier this year trapped in this system, her life on hold indefinitely because of the cruel and arbitrary requirements attached to her visa. Imagine being stuck in this system, designed by Kafka and run by the Australian government, for 12 years. These people have suffered needlessly and for far too long. Federal Labor must grant them permanent visas immediately.

### **Wantirna College**

**Jackson TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (12:58): Wantirna College did a wonderful rendition of *Mamma Mia!* recently. I am going to try and get through as many of the names of the cast and crew as possible: Mackenzie Ross, Chloe Roldan, Harrison Bedford, Jeremy Coath, William Davis, Stephanie Coffey, Tiarnna Handley, Nathan Bromfield, Stephanie Bennett, Ashley Robinson, Emily Gray, Zach Day, Bianca Mizzi, Jessica Nygaard, Harrison Mitchell, Charlotte Antonopoulos, Kai Simcocks, Adam Langsford, Alex Malloy, Amy Cameron, Annabelle Talbot, April James, Ashlee Chun, Ashley Thomas, Ava Crawford, Billie Hopkins, Charlotte Gommers, Chelsea Lin, Deanna Gerock, Dusty Lijnders, Elissa Chen, Ellora Rode-Bramanis, Ellie McNaught, Eloise Rogers, Emma Kenneally, Emma Maple, Eva Grinsted, Felicity McNaught, Gabrielle Leitch, Holly Howard, Isabella Timewell, Ivy Hale-Moore, Jasmine Knowles, Jessica Sprague, Katherine Styles, Kesiah Rawlings, Laura Smith, Lilly Day, Logan Papenfuss, Lucas Halliwell, Maisie Bell, Maxine Delahunty, Michael Dollery, Nicholas Schulte, Quinn Marks, Rachel Cameron, Sage Mogyorossy, Samantha Koedyk, Sandra Vibal, Sarah Ellis, Sophia Baker, Sophie Woods, William Heron, Xan Simon, Zali Moore, Liana Tanser, Harry Langsford, Leila Sandhu, Cooper Rockstro, Charlie Gray, Kaylee Freeman, Nadia Tan, Bethie Troeth, Leilani Nasr, Callum Coombs, Deng Kuot, Elliot Beaugeard, Blake Mackenzie, Izzy Antonopoulos, Joshua Christoff, Thomas Megee, Nyx Main, Leo Beveridge, Zahara Paulger, Brianna McGilvery and Emily Ballard and every other single member of the cast and crew that I may have missed. To everyone in the behind-the-scenes team, what a wonderful production. I learned I love the ABBA song *Super Trouper*, along with the rest of the hits. Well done, Wantirna College.

### **Lowan electorate bushfire preparedness**

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (12:59): Following the bushfires earlier this year that struck the communities of Pomonal and Dadswells Bridge, there were two key asks in those communities. The Pomonal CFA are looking for an ultralight tanker. They borrowed one over that period, but they definitely need one placed there because this community has been hit by bushfire so many times. They loaned a tanker from Stawell CFA. They additionally need another tanker to loan out to that area, but they need one to be based at Stawell. Of course we heard from the Premier herself, who promised the Dadswells Bridge community a new Telstra tower. That area had no telephone reception at all in the lead-up to the bushfires and during the bushfire itself. I therefore urge the Premier to honour her commitment to fund a new mobile tower for Dadswells Bridge but also to make sure that the Stawell and Pomonal fire brigades get the equipment that they desperately need.

### **Lowan electorate drought relief**

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (13:00): We still have not heard anything at all from the Minister for Agriculture about funding for drought support or around drawing a line on the map to unlock some additional support from banks. My part of the state – 20 per cent of the state – has been hit by drought conditions both in the southern area with a green drought but also in the northernmost area through Warracknabeal right through to the border. Our communities are really hurting at this point in time, and I urge the minister to provide additional support to those communities that need it.

**Reset Victoria Rally**

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (13:00): I condemn the Premier for failing to meet with concerned farmers who were at the protest last Friday at the Reset Victoria Rally. There are considerable concerns that these people have. They have had their voice taken away by taking their right to appeal at VCAT away. We need to – *(Time expired)*

**Cheltenham Secondary College**

**Nick STAIKOS** (Bentleigh) (13:01): Congratulations to all students involved in Cheltenham Secondary College's production of *Mamma Mia!*: to the main cast, Georgia Sustenance, Ellie Mackintosh, James Naughton, Carys Goldsworthy, Ethan Rees, Kia Ballinger, Jet McCann, Marc Zamykal, Madeleine Fox, Darci McConnell, Chloe Rogers, Charlie Naughton; to the rest of the cast, Jireh Borstlap, Justine Borstlap, Sofia Comacho Cardenas, Baylee Chynoweth, Ruby Cripps, Corinne Dizon, Catilin Fox, Amelia Grigoropoulos, Anastasia Grigoropoulos, Jonathan Gross, Jessica Hansen, Abbey Hutchinson, Holly Huynh, Masha Kats, Isabella Manners, Lana McGowan, Clairra Nathan, Luca Papworth-Lopez, Gabrielle Peretz, Emma Reed, Eleni Stefanidis, Tyson Stocky, Clare West, Riley Wilson, Charlotte Woodford, Chloe Docherty; to musicians Keziah Hendry and Louis Williams; to assistant director Campbell Hall; and to some of the staff, director Marty Rice, choreographer Laura Knox and musical director Christian Meyer. Thanks also to everyone who worked behind the scenes to make this fantastic musical production possible. I absolutely loved it. But there are more exciting times ahead for Cheltenham Secondary College, because our government is building a brand new building at Cheltenham Secondary College and we hope to appoint a builder before the end of the year. It has been really a pleasure to work with principal Karl Russell on that important development. Again, congratulations to everyone involved in this fantastic musical production of *Mamma Mia!*

**Cheltenham Football Netball Club**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (13:02): I recently attended a Cheltenham Football Netball Club president's lunch hosted by club president Adam King. Thanks to the coaching leadership of Des Ryan, last year the Rosellas broke an 89-year drought by winning a first division premiership, their first since 1934. They also won the division 1 reserve premiership in the division A1 netball premiership, an incredible effort that the netball girls repeated over the weekend. Good luck to the seniors and reserves during the 2024 finals, and congratulations to Helen, who was recently acknowledged for her 17 years volunteering in the canteen at Jack Barker Oval.

**Kilbreda College**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (13:03): I congratulate Kilbreda College, Mentone, on their 120-year anniversary. I was privileged to join acting principal Stephanie Smyth and the college community at St Patrick's Cathedral to celebrate this incredible milestone. Over 120 years the Brigidine Sisters and lay staff have educated and empowered young women in the Brigidine tradition. Without a doubt this education has positively shaped our community for generations.

**Rotary Club of Beaumaris**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (13:03): I also had the honour of speaking at the Beaumaris Rotary general meeting where we had a lively discussion on the importance of AUKUS and key economic and local issues. Thanks to president David Hone, Chris, James, Richard, Mary and others for making me feel very, very welcome.

**Battle of Long Tan commemoration**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (13:03): Lastly, on 15 August I attended the Beaumaris RSL Long Tan dinner to commemorate the anniversary of the battle of Long Tan in Vietnam and honour the sacrifice and service made by veterans. Proceeds were donated to veteran welfare, and I enjoyed the insightful talk by Charlie Bezzina, a former Victoria Police officer. Thanks to Mairi McIntosh, Rhonda Corfield, Reg Black and the other volunteers.

**Michelle Roberts**

**Tim RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (13:04): Recently we came together as a community to recognise the service of Mordialloc College principal Michelle Roberts – 13 incredible years leading a wonderful college community in our local area. Michelle Roberts is an outstanding principal and leader, and to hear the reflections of principals, educators, teachers and education support staff – some that flew in for her farewell dinner last week – was absolutely amazing. It was inspiring to hear in their words what Michelle has meant to them. Our community owes a huge debt of gratitude to her legacy and service. The college has grown from 570 students when Michelle first took over through to over 1200 students, with some building stages through that. But some of the best stories were the popping of the champagne in the staffroom when Mordialloc College got a study score average of 30; the dancing on the table during some of the COVID years, entertaining and supporting students; and the fierce determination and leadership chairing the region for a number of years in excellence and equity across our community.

Thousands of students and tens of thousands in our Kingston region owe a huge debt of gratitude to Michelle, who in 2019 was awarded the Lindsay Thompson award, which is the equivalent of the Brownlow Medal in education excellence. She also got the outstanding secondary college principal award and countless other accolades for a life of service and legacy. Michelle has got a long way to go, but at Mordialloc College we thank her for her service and everything she has done on behalf of our community.

**Mornington Peninsula tourism**

**Sam GROTH** (Nepean) (13:05): The tourism and hospitality sector on the Mornington Peninsula continues to suffer under the weight of this government's mismanagement and poor policy. In addition to facing the challenges posed by macro-economic conditions and the rising cost of doing business in this state, the businesses in my electorate are also facing additional challenges as a result of the Allan Labor government's policies. Despite facing the same issues as communities across regional Victoria the Mornington Peninsula remains under its restrictive metropolitan designation. It deprives businesses of access to grants, opportunities and regulatory changes that other regional businesses can benefit from.

Recently I had the Shadow Minister for Planning, the member for Brighton, down in my electorate, and we attended the Mornington Peninsula Regional Tourism Board's urgent crisis meeting with other industry stakeholders. At this event we heard business after business share their story about just how much they are struggling with the restrictive policies of this government, lengthy and expensive planning regimes, a lack of government investment in destination marketing and council constraints, which are obviously another issue they are dealing with. These things are all driving that industry towards collapse. Areas like mine and others' in this place have limited commercial accommodation. Local tourism operators rely on short-stay options to accommodate patrons and staff during the peak season, and just today we see the government putting another 7.5 per cent on those properties. It is going to make it harder for business and harder for those people looking to travel to the Mornington Peninsula.

**Leopold Primary School**

**Alison MARCHANT** (Bellarine) (13:07): Last week I visited Leopold Primary School and their breakfast club, where toasties, cereal and fruit were on offer. I met students and staff – Skye and Rob from the wellbeing team – who were ensuring students were able to access that breakfast before the morning bell. There were a number of students helping – student helpers from grades 3 to 6 serving up breakfast to their friends – and it was incredible to hear about that initiative and the confidence that the students had developed through the opportunity to volunteer in the breakfast program.

We know breakfast club is an incredible program in helping to reduce the financial strain on families, ensuring that kids are getting a nourishing start to the day. It is currently run in several schools across

the Bellarine, but I am very much looking forward to this government expanding the program across all government schools next year, meaning that the 12 government schools across the Bellarine will have a chance to offer breakfast to their students.

I am proud to say that this is not the only way that the Allan Labor government is supporting Bellarine kids and their families. Additional school costs, such as uniforms, camps, excursions and extracurricular activities, and the current cost-of-living crisis do add up. That is why in 2025 we are supporting families with the \$400 school saving bonus to help cover those costs as well as with our Get Active Kids vouchers, by tripling our Glasses for Kids program and with our Smile Squad dental vans. I know these investments go a long way. Thank you to Leopold Primary School for a visit to your breakfast club.

#### **Eastern Football Netball League**

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (13:08): Last Saturday two of our amazing local teams faced off in the Eastern Football Netball League division 1 women's grand final – Park Orchards footy club and North Ringwood footy club. It was a thrilling contest, and in the end the determined Park Orchards girls staged an incredible comeback, with last-minute goals from Daisy Cooper, Bri Clark and Jorja Livingstone securing their win. A shout-out to director of women's sport Vicki Knight, coach Simon McAlliffe, captain Alannah Boel and president Rod Faulkner for their leadership. The North Ringwood team also fought valiantly. They are a brilliant club led by coach Jake Ireland, assistant coaches Luke and Phil, team manager Mel, captain Tayla Dean and president Dean Philpotts. Congratulations to both teams on a fantastic season.

#### **Warrandyte Basketball Association**

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (13:09): Congratulations to Warrandyte Basketball's division 1 women, who took home the win last Saturday in the Big V grand final. This was a remarkable achievement for our local team led by president Darren McGinty, vice-president Michael Davey, iconic coach Paul O'Brien, team manager Cathy Davidson and captain Ellie Locke. A shout-out to MVP Shannon Powell-Ross, who scored 30 of the 73 points. This has been a David and Goliath season for Warrandyte Venom, who have faced off against much larger and better resourced Victorian clubs throughout the season, yet they still emerge victorious. We are all celebrating with you. Yeah, the girls! Well done to Warrandyte Basketball.

#### **Reservoir High School**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (13:10): Reservoir High School put on a wonderful performance of *Matilda Jr.* yesterday for students from Reservoir Views Primary, Preston North East Primary and Bundoora and Kingsbury primary schools. The whole cast and crew were fantastic, but I want to recognise some stand-out performances from Aiden Turker and Bixie Woolford as the evil parents, Alexia Coulloupas as Miss Trunchbull, Summer Dunn as Rudolpho, Hannah de Angelis as Miss Honey – who sang exceptionally well, I thought – and Ayda Yilmaz, who starred as Matilda. Thanks also to director Nina Rossini and producers Rohan Bayley and Darryl Forbes. Tickets are still available for Thursday and Friday nights if members want to get along.

#### **Preston High School**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (13:10): We were lucky to have another great musical put on at the Darebin Arts Centre by Preston High School, who performed *Mary Poppins* to sold-out shows over the weekend. A shout-out there to the performances by Jesse Fesili as Mr Banks, Nicola Butler as Mrs Banks, Willa Sheedy and Tilly Godfrey as the two Banks children – who got a lot of laughs on the way through – and Holly Riordan, who anchored the performance at a very high standard in the classic Julie Andrews role. Well done to the whole cast, band and crew.

**Anthony Milanovic**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (13:11): Finally, I would like to note the sad and unexpected passing of Anthony Milanovic of Slavonij Deli at Preston Market. Anthony was a much-loved member of the Preston trader community who was very active in discussions about the market's future. Our thoughts are with his parents, his friends and his family.

**Pakenham electorate community activities**

**Emma VULIN** (Pakenham) (13:11): Locally it has been busy as usual. I had a nice visit to Cardinia Storm Hockey Club, watching the under-12s match. I attended the newly named Rob Porter Reserve in Officer and was a guest at the Officer Roos ladies lunch. I had a visit to Pakenham Pumas Baseball Club to commemorate 25 years with past players and life members. This was followed by a special Saturday night when I officially handed over the keys for the new state-of-the-art rescue truck to the dedicated volunteers at Nar Nar Goon fire brigade. The members of our CFA are all absolutely incredible, and I thank all of them for the work they do protecting our communities.

I was also happy to host the Premier with my colleagues and the mayor at the Officer Gurdwara to show off the great work that our local Sikh community do to support our community. I officially opened the Toun-nun Child and Family Centre in Officer with Cr Tammy Radford, another great partnership initiative between the state government and Cardinia Shire Council.

A big thankyou to Anchor Community Care for having the member for Frankston and me visit to discuss their MyLife program, which supports young people transitioning from state and residential care. They provide vital assistance to some of our most vulnerable community members, and I thank them for their important work.

**Member for Mulgrave**

**Emma VULIN** (Pakenham) (13:12): I also want to say a big thankyou to my lovely friend Eden Foster, the member for Mulgrave, for hosting her Cancer Council morning tea. Even while undergoing chemotherapy, she continues to think of others. We love you, Eden, and we are here with you by your side.

**Brinbeal Secondary College**

**Dylan WIGHT** (Tarneit) (13:13): Recently I had the pleasure of visiting Brinbeal Secondary College, one of Tarneit's outstanding local high schools. During my visit I had the opportunity to tour their impressive new community hub building. This includes four external netball and basketball courts; three internal courts, including a show court; food technology rooms; a canteen; and a performing arts studio. Community hubs like this one offer a versatile space for our community to access top-flight facilities. They also provide students with dedicated areas for PE lessons, food technology classes and performances. A big thankyou to principal Simon Haber and the school leaders who guided me on the tour.

I am also pleased to share that Brinbeal Secondary College has joined the growing list of schools participating in the school breakfast club program, now offering free breakfast to students. In the most recent budget the Allan Labor government committed a further \$21.1 million to expand the school breakfast club program to include all government schools that opt in across Victoria. In Tarneit that means that not just Brinbeal but also new schools Wimba Primary School, Nearnung Primary School and Karwan Primary School are all set to provide free breakfasts to their students. Having now delivered over 40 million breakfasts, we are making sure that no student starts the day off hungry. The Allan Labor government's commitment to education is evident in the exceptional facilities and programs we are creating for our students and families.

**Northern Bay College**

**Ella GEORGE** (Lara) (13:14): Northern Bay College recently hosted the Premier and me at their Goldsworthy and Wexford campuses. The visit began with students leading a tour of the recently completed \$17 million upgrade at Goldsworthy campus, which has delivered a brand new performing arts centre, an administration building and classrooms. Students also pitched their ideas for a stronger and more inclusive school community, including ways we can combat racism and support mental health and wellbeing in schools. A special thank you to the students who led the tour: Farzana Mohammed, Medhi Mohammed Arif, Rezai Rehman, Fatima Ali, Freshta Hadari, Hunter Palmer, You Cho Ya Pwar, Elizabeth Hicks, Mohammed Hussein and Bailey King. These students are wonderful ambassadors of the Northern Bay College community. They facilitated the Premier's visit with intelligence, thoughtfulness and genuine excitement and pride for their school community.

Next, we headed to the Wexford campus to spend some time with grades 1 and 2 students, reading some books together as part of the Premier's Reading Challenge. Both the Premier and I were incredibly impressed by these students and their literacy skills and love for reading. Thank you to college principal Scott Diamond, Goldsworthy campus principal Erin Prendergast, Wexford campus principal Ben McCredden and all the staff and students who ensured our visit was so enjoyable. Each and every time I visit Northern Bay College I walk away feeling inspired by the next generation of community leaders. To all of the students: be proud of your school and what you are achieving.

**Sunbury community hospital**

**Josh BULL** (Sunbury) (13:16): I was thrilled to, just a couple of weeks ago, join the Premier at the Sunbury community hospital, which is of course being delivered by this Labor government. Despite the best efforts of some of those opposite to talk down this project and undermine our community, we are focused on ensuring that we are delivering the best health care locally when and where you need it. The Premier and I were delighted to be joined by our good friend Jill Hennessey, the team from the health building authority and the project team as well. This project is of course about delivering more urgent care, expanded dialysis, expanded oncology and more medical imaging locally and is something that the community is particularly excited about. In more terrific news, I am really pleased to report that this facility will open very, very soon – this year. As I mentioned, it is something the community is particularly excited about.

**Sunbury Senior Citizens Centre**

**Josh BULL** (Sunbury) (13:17): I was also thrilled to join members of the Sunbury senior citizens group last week to look at what will be an exciting project for them: upgrading their senior citizens centre – a partnership with Hume City Council. I particularly want to acknowledge Louise and Frank Zambello for their passion, their advocacy and being always focused on the community and always focused on getting things done.

**Malayalee Association of Victoria**

**Pauline RICHARDS** (Cranbourne) (13:17): I am very pleased to say Happy Onam and thank you to the Malayalee Association of Victoria, especially to Madanan Chellappan. What a great day – God's own country. The Keralite community is an absolute gift.

***Business of the house*****Notices of motion**

**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) (13:17): I move:

That the consideration of government business, notice of motion 1, be postponed until later this day.

**Motion agreed to.**



*Bills***Youth Justice Bill 2024***Council's amendments***Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:**

1. Clause 1, page 3, line 8, omit “1977 to provide” and insert “1977, including by providing”.
2. Clause 2, after line 16 insert –
 

“(1AA) The following provisions come into operation on the day after the day on which this Act receives the Royal Assent –

  - (a) this section; and
  - (b) Division 3 of Part 22.1; and
  - (c) section 904.”.
3. Clause 2, line 17, after “subsections” insert “(1A),”.
4. Clause 2, line 17, after “and (3),” insert “the remaining provisions of”.
5. Clause 2, line 17, omit “comes” and insert “come”.
6. Clause 2, after line 18 insert –
 

“(1A) If Division 2 of Part 22.1 does not come into operation before 2 December 2024, it comes into operation on that day.”.
7. Clause 2, line 19, after “If” insert “the remaining provisions of”.
8. Clause 2, line 20, after “Chapter 20,” insert “the remaining provisions of”.
9. Clause 3, page 22, line 13, after “law” insert “(other than a spit hood)”.
10. Clause 3, page 22, line 14, after “restraint” insert “(other than a spit hood)”.
11. Clause 19, after line 26 insert –

**“Note**

Section 92(1) establishes the hierarchy of options for alleged offending behaviour by a child. The hierarchy requires a police officer to apply the least restrictive option that is appropriate in the circumstances.”.

12. Clause 47, line 20, omit “, from time to time, may” and insert “must”.
13. Clause 48, line 2, omit “may” and insert “must”.
14. Clause 73, page 88, line 12, after “restraint” insert “(other than a spit hood)”.
15. Insert the following New Clause to follow clause 128 –

**“128A Reading aloud of victim statement**

- (1) A person who provides a written communication under section 128 may request that any part of that communication is read aloud, in the course of the early diversion group conference, by –
  - (a) the convenor; or
  - (b) a person chosen by the person making the request and who is approved by the convenor for that purpose.
- (2) If a request is made under subsection (1), the convenor must determine if the reading aloud of each requested part of the communication is appropriate, having regard to –
  - (a) the objects of the early diversion group conference; and
  - (b) the circumstances of the particular case.

**Example**

The convenor may determine that it is not appropriate to read any part of a communication that is offensive, would breach another person’s privacy or could jeopardise the safety of any person.

- (3) If the convenor determines that the reading aloud of any part of the communication is appropriate, the convenor must ensure that, in the course of the early diversion group

conference, that part of the communication is read aloud by the person who was requested to do so.

- (4) The convenor may direct a person who is reading aloud any part of the communication as to –
  - (a) which parts of the communication are determined appropriate to be read aloud; and
  - (b) the time available, which must be reasonable, for reading aloud those parts of the communication.”.

16. Clause 439, line 29, before “recreational” insert “exercise and other”.

17. Clause 439, after line 33 insert –

**“Example**

An example of meaningful exercise and recreational activities is a child or young person having the opportunity to spend a target of 2 hours exercising or playing sport.”.

18. Clause 447, after line 16 insert –

“(1A) The program must be completed and agreed to within 2 weeks of the child or young person being received into a youth justice custodial centre.”.

19. Clause 447, after line 30 insert –

“(3) If a program does not include any particular matter referred to in subsection (2), a report explaining why must be attached to the program.”.

20. Clause 477, page 410, line 4, after “restraint” insert “(other than a spit hood)”.

21. Clause 477, page 410, line 15, after “restraint” insert “(other than a spit hood)”.

22. Insert the following New Clause to follow clause 504 –

**“504A Publication of information – unclothed searches**

The Commissioner for Youth Justice must cause to be published on the Department’s Internet site at the end of every 12 month period the number of unclothed searches carried out under this Division during that 12 month period.”.

23. Clause 524, page 447, after line 12 insert –

“(3) If –

- (a) a parent or legal representative of a child or young person requests that the Commissioner for Youth Justice give a report of the information included on the Isolations Register in relation to the use of isolation in relation to that child or young person; and
- (b) the child or young person consents to the Commissioner for Youth Justice giving that report –

the Commissioner for Youth Justice must give that report as soon as reasonably practicable.

- (4) Despite subsection (3), the Commissioner for Youth Justice is not required to give a report to a parent if the giving of the report would not be appropriate in the circumstances.

**Example**

There is a history of family violence and the giving of the report jeopardises the safety of any person.”.

24. Insert the following New Clause to follow clause 524 –

**“524A Publication of information from Isolations Register**

The Commissioner for Youth Justice must cause to be published on the Department’s Internet site the following information from the Isolations Register at the end of every 3 month period –

- (a) the number of times isolation was used in the preceding 3 months; and
- (b) for each use of isolation in the preceding 3 months –
  - (i) the reasons for the use of isolation, including the purpose for which it was authorised; and
  - (ii) prescribed information about the duration of the isolation.”.

25. Clause 580, page 490, line 14, after “restraint” insert “(other than a spit hood)”.

26. Clause 580, page 490, line 25, after “restraint” insert “(other than a spit hood)”.

27. Clause 622, after line 2, insert –  
“(1AA) This section applies if the Youth Parole Board receives information about a child or young person from a person included on the Youth Justice Victims Register in relation to that child or young person.”.
28. Clause 622, lines 3 to 5, omit “If the Youth Parole Board receives information from a person on the Youth Justice Victims Register, the” and insert “The”.
29. Clause 622, line 5, omit “not”.
30. Clause 622, line 7, omit “whether –” and insert “any of the following –”.
31. Clause 622, line 8, omit “a child” and insert “whether the child”.
32. Clause 622, line 10, after “(b)” insert “whether”.
33. Clause 622, line 10, omit “a” and insert “the”.
34. Clause 622, line 10, omit “person.” and insert “person; or”.
35. Clause 622, after line 10 insert –  
“(c) conditions of the child’s or young person’s parole under section 632, 633 or 634.”.
36. Clause 622, lines 11 to 17, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert –  
“(2) In having regard to the information, the Youth Parole Board may, in its absolute discretion, give the information such weight as the Board sees fit.”.
37. Clause 623, after line 18 insert –  
“(1AA) This section applies if the Youth Parole Board receives a victim impact statement in relation to a particular child or young person.”.
38. Clause 623, lines 19 and 20, omit “If the Youth Parole Board receives a victim impact statement, the” and insert “The”.
39. Clause 623, line 21, omit “not”.
40. Clause 623, line 22, omit “whether –” and insert “any of the following –”.
41. Clause 623, line 23, omit “a child” and insert “whether the child”.
42. Clause 623, line 25, after “(b)” insert “whether”.
43. Clause 623, line 25, omit “a” and insert “the”.
44. Clause 623, line 25, omit “person.” and insert “person; or”.
45. Clause 623, after line 25 insert –  
“(c) conditions of the child’s or young person’s parole under section 632, 633 or 634.”.
46. Clause 623, lines 26 to 31, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert –  
“(2) In having regard to the victim impact statement, the Youth Parole Board may, in its absolute discretion, give the statement such weight as the Board sees fit.”.
47. Clause 624, line 5, omit “not”.
48. Clause 624, line 7, omit “whether –” and insert “any of the following –”.
49. Clause 624, line 8, omit “a child” and insert “whether the child”.
50. Clause 624, line 10, after “(b)” insert “whether”.
51. Clause 624, line 10, omit “a” and insert “the”.
52. Clause 624, line 10, omit “person.” and insert “person; or”.
53. Clause 624, after line 10 insert –  
“(c) conditions of the child’s or young person’s parole under section 632, 633 or 634.”.
54. Clause 624, lines 11 to 17, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert –  
“(3) In having regard to the parole stage group conference report, the Youth Parole Board may, in its absolute discretion, give the report such weight as the Board sees fit.”.
55. Clause 654, line 9, after “parole” insert “determinations and”.

56. Clause 659, page 554, after line 3 insert –
- “(aa) details of the custodial sentence being served by the child or young person, including the period of detention under that sentence;
  - (aab) details of an escape of the child or young person from custody that occurs while the custodial sentence is being served;”.
57. Clause 664, line 6, omit “parole conditions under section 632, 633 or 634.” and insert –
- “any of the following –
  - (a) whether a child or young person is eligible for release on parole;
  - (b) whether to grant parole to a child or young person;
  - (c) conditions of a child’s or young person’s parole under section 632, 633 or 634.”.
58. Clause 718, after line 21 insert –
- “(5) The Secretary and the Minister must ensure that, before the first anniversary of the commencement of this section, the first approved strategic plan has been published.”.
59. Clause 746, line 11, omit “**devised**” and insert “**derived**”.
60. Clause 855, page 735, line 13, omit “**devised**” and insert “**derived**”.
61. Chapter heading before clause 899, omit “**Trial of electronic monitoring of children on bail in certain circumstances**” and insert “**Bail amendments**”.
62. Insert the following Division heading before clause 899 –
- “**Division 1 – Trial of electronic monitoring of children on bail in certain circumstances**”.
63. Insert the following Division heading and New Clauses to follow clause 903 –
- “**Division 2 – Scheduled offences, unacceptable risk and conduct conditions**
- 903A All offences – unacceptable risk test**
- (1) Before section 4E(1)(a)(i) of the **Bail Act 1977** insert –
  - “(iaa) commit a Schedule 1 offence or a Schedule 2 offence; or”.
  - (2) In section 4E(1)(a)(i) of the **Bail Act 1977**, after “(i)” insert “otherwise”.
- 903B Conduct conditions**
- (1) Before section 5AAA(1)(a) of the **Bail Act 1977** insert –
  - “(aa) commit a Schedule 1 offence or a Schedule 2 offence; or”.
  - (2) In section 5AAA(1)(a) of the **Bail Act 1977**, after “(a)” insert “otherwise”.
- 903C New section 30A inserted**
- After section 30 of the **Bail Act 1977** insert –
- “**30A Offence to commit Schedule 1 offence or Schedule 2 offence while on bail**
- An accused on bail must not commit a Schedule 1 offence or Schedule 2 offence while on bail.
- Penalty: 30 penalty units or 3 months imprisonment.
- Note**
- See sections 16 and 33 of the **Sentencing Act 1991** and sections 411 and 413 of the **Children, Youth and Families Act 2005**.”.
- Division 3 – Examples, revocation and review**
- 903D All offences – unacceptable risk test**
- For the example at the foot of section 4E(1) of the **Bail Act 1977** substitute –
- “**Example**
- An unacceptable risk that the accused, if released on bail, would –
- (a) drive dangerously; or
  - (b) commit a family violence offence; or
  - (c) commit an aggravated burglary; or

- (d) commit an armed robbery; or
- (e) commit a carjacking; or
- (f) commit a home invasion.”.

**903E All offences – unacceptable risk test**

For the example at the foot of section 5AAA(1) of the **Bail Act 1977** substitute –

**“Example**

A bail decision maker may impose a condition in order to reduce the likelihood that the accused may –

- (a) drive dangerously; or
- (b) commit a family violence offence; or
- (c) commit an aggravated burglary; or
- (d) commit an armed robbery; or
- (e) commit a carjacking; or
- (f) commit a home invasion.”.

**903F Application for revocation of bail**

After section 18AE(1) of the **Bail Act 1977** insert –

“(1A) Without limiting subsection (1), an application under that subsection may be made because the applicant believes on reasonable grounds that the person –

- (a) has committed an offence since bail was granted; or
- (b) is likely to commit an offence whilst on bail; or
- (c) has breached a condition of bail; or
- (d) is likely to breach a condition of bail or the bail undertaking.”.

**903G Section 32C amended**

- (1) In the heading to section 32C of the **Bail Act 1977**, for “**amendments made by Bail Amendment Act 2023**” substitute “**certain amendments**”.
- (2) In section 32C(1) of the **Bail Act 1977**, for “**by the Bail Amendment Act 2023.**” substitute “by –
  - (a) the **Bail Amendment Act 2023**; and
  - (b) Part 22.1 of the **Youth Justice Act 2024** (other than Division 1 of that Part).”.

64. Insert the following Division heading before clause 904 –

**“Division 4 – Transitional provisions and technical amendments”.**

65. Clause 904, line 10, omit ‘committed.’. and insert “committed.”.
66. Clause 904, after line 10 insert –
 

“(24A) Section 30A applies in respect of an offence alleged to have been committed on or after the commencement of section 903C of the **Youth Justice Act 2024.**”.
67. Insert the following New Clause to follow clause 913 –

**“913A Offence to commit Schedule 1 offence or Schedule 2 offence while on bail**

In the Note at the foot of section 30A of the **Bail Act 1977**, for “sections 411 and 413 of the **Children, Youth and Families Act 2005.**” substitute “section 327 of the **Youth Justice Act 2024.**”.

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (13:18): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

I rise to make a few brief comments in support of these amendments to the Youth Justice Bill 2024. The amendments were agreed to in the other place, in the early hours of the morning in the last sitting week, to put community safety at the forefront of decision-makers’ minds.

There are amendments before the house that amend the Bail Act 1977, and I would like to spend some time outlining what those changes will mean for Victorians. The amendments strengthen our bail system by making it clear that serious offences, such as aggravated burglary, carjacking and home invasion, have serious consequences. These amendments also make it clear that bail decision makers must assess the specific risk of a person committing serious offending if released on bail as well as community safety generally. Specifically they call out the serious behaviour of dangerous driving and the serious crimes of aggravated burglary, armed robbery, carjacking and home invasion as explicit examples of offences that present an unacceptable risk to community safety. They also clarify the ability of police to apply for bail revocation for breach of bail conditions and introduce a new separate offence for committing a serious crime, including aggravated burglary, carjacking, murder and rape, while on bail. These are significant schedule 1 and 2 offences that have been canvassed in the bill.

These are reforms that respond to the feedback the government received from Victoria Police and the courts and are targeted at serious alleged offending on bail, consistent with the reforms that commenced in March this year. This is to ensure that the amendments will not have an overpunitive impact on people accused of lower level offending. It is about striking the right balance. The legislation appropriately balances the need to ensure that young people who have made a mistake have the opportunity to turn their lives around with holding serious repeat offenders to account, because community safety is the government's highest priority.

I would also like to touch on a couple of other elements and the initiatives that relate to victim support. We have seen the further affirmation in the bill with regard to electronic monitoring of offenders. This presents an opportunity for the house and the Parliament to have the nation's first standalone Youth Justice Bill and hopefully the first Youth Justice Act in the country. I want to commend the Minister for Corrections in the other place for his leadership in not only bringing this bill to the Parliament but bringing many years of hard work and policy development in the best interests of holding serious offenders to account while also providing opportunities for young people to turn their lives around. In the end it is the Minister for Corrections, Mr Erdogan in the other place, who has been able to deliver these very significant and substantial reforms. He has also been able to see the bill copiloted through the other place by the Attorney-General. I also want to commend her work and leadership with her community, with the courts and with many of her advocates in the legal space, who have also made a significant contribution to the development of this work. The justice ministers are as one in the government in relation to this work and have supported one another and supported our community to make sure that we have appropriate reforms in youth justice and, finally, to bring to this Parliament a standalone Youth Justice Bill that has the support of the upper house and, I would hope, the support of the Assembly.

I also want to acknowledge the Premier and the work she has done and the leadership she has shown to ensure that the Youth Justice Bill passes this Parliament to provide opportunities to young people in our community to turn their lives around but also to ensure that there are serious consequences for serious offending and to give further directions, advice and understandings to the courts and to our police and bail decision makers on the capacity and the range of decisions that they are able to make. That guidance has been laid out very clearly in the examples that we have put forward in the bill for consideration to draw to the attention of all of those decision-makers what the expectations are of the people and the Parliament in relation to these matters.

Lastly, can I say that it is really a matter here for those opposite to make a determination whether they want to go down the path of continuing to affirm locking up 10- and 11-year-olds in our community. It is up to those opposite to make a determination whether they support turning the lives of young people around in our community. It is up to those opposite to make a determination whether they support the reforms that have been put forward by the government and that have been supported by the upper house. I would like to commend members of the Labor caucus in the other place for the heartfelt and comprehensive contributions they have made in relation to advocating for and supporting this bill and other members in the other place who have come to the conclusion that supporting young

people to turn their lives around but also holding serious offenders accountable for the serious matters that have been committed needs to be understood and it needs to be affirmed in this legislation.

We also can point to the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, who has made it clear publicly in his statements that he expects to see more alleged offenders remanded for alleged crimes based on the reforms that have been outlined in this bill. He has made those statements publicly, even though he has had criticism from those opposite in relation to those remarks. What we do understand is the community draw their strength and confidence in our legal system also by what they hear and what they understand being affirmed and put forward by Victoria Police. It is Victoria Police that keep the community safe, it is Victoria Police who have a role along with our courts as bail decision makers and it is Victoria Police that have welcomed these changes. We have responded to our engagement with them about what they need to get the tools that they need to do the job.

I commend the reforms and the outline in this legislation that has been put forward to the Parliament. It has been passed by the other place and we would hope it would have the support of all members of this place to ensure that we can continue to hold offenders to account and find the right balance that also provides a level of support to turn young lives around when mistakes are made. It is also about supporting victims and making sure that they have the support they need to rebuild their lives. I am very confident that the changes we have made and the amendments that have come to this place from the Legislative Council deserve this Assembly's support, and I commend the bill to the house. I thank all members for the constructive input that they have made.

There is no doubt that having what will be the first standalone Youth Justice Bill in the country that seeks not only to turn lives around but also to hold serious offenders to account is work that has taken very many years. There has been great leadership by both the Premier of Victoria, Ms Allan, and also the Labor caucus and the Labor Party to make sure that these changes are made in the best interests of all Victorians to keep them safe and to support everyone in our community by making sure that there are consequences when there is serious offending but also that there are opportunities to put an end to the repeat offending of young people who need to turn their lives around and be given the appropriate supports in our community.

**Brad BATTIN** (Berwick) (13:25): I rise in relation to the Council's amendments to the Youth Justice Bill 2024. I will start off by saying what a weekend poor Michael Voss had. He had to go to the football and endure watching his team play a game that was probably at or below average for what Carlton would expect for the finals, where Jack 'Snags' Higgins kicked a goal with seconds to go. If you thought that was not enough pressure on Michael Voss, then today, whilst getting a coffee on his way in to work, he witnessed a car roll. He went over there and filmed it as the people got out, who ended up being offenders from an allegedly stolen vehicle. If you look at the photos, he gave them a bit of a head start. I will be honest: if Michael Voss were chasing me, I would want to be running fairly fast too. He apprehended them and did a citizen's arrest here in Victoria.

**Michael O'Brien** interjected.

**Brad BATTIN**: He should have tackled Jack Higgins, but that is an example of where crime is in this state. We have got a huge issue with crime here in Victoria. Crime continues to increase at rates beyond recognition, rates that we have not seen at any time in our history. Aggravated burglaries are up 146 per cent in 10 years. Aggravated burglaries – people going into houses with knives – are up 146 per cent.

*Members interjecting.*

**Brad BATTIN**: I do note that. Thank you, member for Brighton. All of those Labor members who think this is funny should come out and speak to the victims who have had someone come into their house with a knife. Come and speak to those victims who have had their houses burgled while they are in bed and have woken up to find someone standing beside their bed. Come and speak to the victims who continually have to put up with this crime out in Berwick and Casey, where we are

number two in the state for aggravated burglaries. That is why when we spoke about youth justice we were very, very straightforward on how we wanted this dealt with.

The key adjustments in this are the consequential changes to bail. I note the member for Malvern will be speaking on this as well, but we are very strong in our wording on this. The bail amendments that are being made by the Labor government today will leave bail laws in Victoria weaker than they were in March this year. I note that the Minister for Police just said then that the Chief Commissioner of Police came out in support of some of the changes they have made, yet in March the police commissioner was asking for those powers to be returned to what they were pre March. He knew the impact on crime in Victoria was going to happen before those changes happened, so if the government want to be true to their word and listen to the chief commissioner, they should reverse those changes and put them back to what the chief commissioner has called for in the past.

We cannot see a case here in Victoria where young people are committing serious offences, going into the system and then continuing to get bail not once or twice but eight, nine or 10 times. The member for Gippsland South highlighted one case just this week where a young person in his community had got bail on eight separate occasions and now for the first time has been remanded. These are the things we need to make sure we do clarify when we are talking about bail so that Victorians can be safe in the knowledge that young violent offenders are not released to go out and commit more serious offences on the street.

The police minister also mentioned victim support and how victims would be supported with some of the changes in the amendments. It is really important to note that the amendments that were put forward for that were those put forward by this side of the house. Amendments in relation to victim support, victims being heard, ensuring that victim impact statements are heard when offenders are going through parole hearings – all of those were put forward by this side of the house. The Labor Party wanted to silence the victims. When it came to parole hearings, they wanted to ensure that victim impact statements could not be read out in the process of someone going for parole. It is absolutely and utterly disgraceful that you would want to silence victims, who have already gone through enough, and say to them, ‘You actually can’t have a say when it comes to what is happening in parole.’ And it did not say ‘should or should not’; it said ‘must not’. It said it must not be in there, and that was something that was really important.

It also has in here one of the changes we put forward, which was to require the minister to determine the performance standards for registered Aboriginal youth justice agencies – ‘must’ not ‘may’. Why is this important? It is so important that when you are effectively using government money, taxpayers money, to go out to work on rehabilitation for young people, whether they are Indigenous or not, and that money is going out to organisations to give the best opportunities for those young people moving forward, you take into consideration the outcomes of what those programs are doing. If you do not, then on many occasions – and we have seen it in the past – we are effectively handing money out and the programs are not achieving what they need to do.

There are two ways around this. You can go back to those agencies and work with them to ensure that they can make improvements and changes and see fit to make sure they are delivering the services they promised to provide and are getting funded for, or you can stop funding them and find a new program. The reality is you cannot keep giving money out to organisations who are not achieving the goals of giving those young people a genuine opportunity to not go back into the justice system in the future, and I think that is probably one of the most important changes that came through with this bill.

We also had the expanding of the custodial right to positive development to include a requirement that an individualised program with meaningful and structured activities and support must be completed and agreed to within two weeks of the child or young person being received into the youth justice custodial centre. It is really important when young people go into the youth justice centres, when they are either going to be remanded or sentenced, that you do ensure that they have an understanding of what is expected from them and what opportunities they can have whilst they are in there.



We have the saying ‘Idle hands are the devil’s playground.’ I do not care what justice setting you go into, whether it is youth or adult systems – if you have a group of people sitting around with nothing to do, they will generally find the worst outcomes. They will get bored and they will start to do things that are not deemed in their best interests, in the best interests of the safety of the facility they are in or in the best interests of their rehabilitation, coming out of the system. So it is really important that as soon as they get in we have a requirement legislated that they get that course set out for them as soon as possible, to give those young people the best chance possible.

I note the police minister wanted to say that on our side of the house we all want to lock everyone up and throw away the key, and we know he wants to go out there. If you want to talk about Trump-style comments, they are the kinds of comments that you get from Donald Trump, where he just comes out and effectively lies and says that it is not going to come out on the outside. The reality is we have said very openly – and if anyone can find on the record where I have said I want to lock up 10- and 11-year-olds, good luck to you. I have always said if we can create a system where we give young people the best opportunities moving forward to not go back into the justice system, that is an outcome 88 people in this house want. That is one thing we would all 100 per cent agree on. We may disagree on how to get there, but that is one thing that we all agree on.

There currently is no person who is 10, 11, 12 or 13 in custody in the justice system, which says some parts of the system are working. However, there are issues when we are talking about some of the kids that are currently out. Because this system will make changes for those 11- and 12-year-olds, they will not get the support they need. They cannot be forced into the support they need. And we know that young kids, depending on their family background, unless it is forced will not actually partake in those programs to give them the best chances going forward.

So our whole philosophy on this side has been that we want to treat each person as an individual. If they want to commit crimes, violent crimes, in this state – and I do not care at what age, whatever age they are – we need to have a justice system that says, ‘We can work with you to give you the best opportunities, to get education, to go to work or to go to the services and get the support that you need.’ They are the three most important things we can have in our justice system. Every person who enters it, whether it is through a custodial sentence or not, must have opportunities for education.

We have got Parkville College, and we know now, factually, that Parkville College is having its troubles, particularly down in Cherry Creek, to keep staff and to put programs in place for the young offenders down there because of the increase in violence and the lack of control that is happening in Cherry Creek. It is a dysfunctional system when you go down to Cherry Creek. We have got it at Parkville College itself. When Parkville College was originally brought in, it was designed around giving young kids the best opportunities in education and enforcing it whilst they were in a custodial setting. Every child in a custodial setting must do a specific amount of education. That has all changed. Now that we are giving these kids a lot more chances and choices while they are in there, they are going to pick and choose the wrong directions. We need to make sure that when our youth are in custody in our youth justice system there is not just an opportunity for education but we are pushing them and forcing them into that education opportunity. It is not necessarily saying every single one of them has to do maths and English, but it means we can go in there and do vocational studies. We can give them the tools so that when they get out they can go and look for work. We can make sure they get the services and the support that they need to better themselves while they are in custody, rather than sitting around in a room creating havoc and causing issues or, as we have seen down in Cherry Creek, becoming violent. That is not the outcome that is good for us. It is not the outcome that is good for the staff. It is not the outcome that is good for anyone.

The second part of that is ensuring that when young people come out they have an opportunity to work. We all know education is obviously the ideal outcome, but there is a certain cohort who probably are not going to be going back into an education setting – generally we are getting to 14 and older here – and we should be working with them on how we can engage them so they can get meaningful employment and opportunities for themselves to grow. Not everybody is destined to stay to the end of

VCE. I left school at 15 years of age. You can get places in life without going through that education system – and you may go back and educate later on – but we have got to be giving these kids the tools. If we try to force them into a position when they are outside and they do not have the support from their family or we do not have the services to back them up, we are only pushing them in a direction that they are not going to go. You cannot add that extra pressure onto the schools. We have seen the outcomes where we see a lot of these young kids ending up committing violent crimes, which causes major concerns going forward.

The third one is ensuring they have got the services they need. As I have said, I have spoken about different parts of the world where you have wraparound systems for these kids. The Youth Justice Bill failed in that. It did not come in with a plan about how we wrap services around kids who enter the justice system or exit the justice system. We want to make sure those wraparound services are full time, to give the kids the best opportunity. Is it going to cost a lot of money? Yes, of course it will. Is it an investment? One hundred per cent. If we keep one kid out of jail, that is \$5900 every day that we save, each and every day for a kid we keep out of the prison system. The equivalent is we could put 40 kids through Scotch College for the amount we spend on one child in a youth detention centre. If we are to have the opportunity to put things in place to keep them out of that system, those wraparound services have to be put in a lot earlier on.

That is where this Youth Justice Bill misses out. It does not take that opportunity to look at how we could amalgamate and work across departments, with the health department, councils and youth justice programs. How can we ensure that the programs being delivered are giving the best outcomes? There was an opportunity for this bill to do that, and I think it was really important that we got that done. It expands the information available to victims on the youth register, which is the gap between the adults. It was large, so we campaigned for a wider array of information to be available. Again, it is really important that information is available to victims so they can be heard.

The other thing in here which is really, really important is scrutiny. Scrutiny is something that when it comes youth justice is very important, and the government must publish the youth justice strategic plan within one year of the commencement of the act. We cannot scrutinise the youth justice program at the moment, and we went through VCAT trying to get some of the strategic documents from the government in relation to youth justice. The only thing I have managed to find is they seem to have a lot of money to find a lot of solicitors to try to stop these reports from getting out, including one of the reports that, when we got the information back, said the report was outdated and no longer in use. We believe that should be a public document. There is a fairly simple answer to that one. The messaging then changed on three separate occasions in VCAT such that it is now the ‘current’ document, it is a ‘work in progress’ document or at the very end it is a ‘cabinet in confidence’ document. This government fails when it comes to scrutiny in the youth justice system, so much so that every FOI application that we have made in youth justice has ended up in VCAT. They do not release anything when it comes to youth justice. We are very fair. We do not want things that are going to impact on security. We do not want things that will impact on individuals or result in a name released of an individual within the system. We believe that should be protected 100 per cent.

But when it comes to the strategy of how you are going to work with these young offenders that go inside with a custodial sentence, or those prior to it, that strategy should be public so it can be assessed and scrutinised not just by us but by experts in the field, and so it can be compared so we can look at what is happening in different parts of the state and what is happening in other parts of the world, which we can all then take on board and say, ‘Okay, how can it be improved for the best outcome for those young people and in the long term for community safety?’

Scrutiny of this government is a bit of a thing which I know they do not do a lot of in the departments, but what we do see in youth justice is everything is hidden. They fundamentally do not want people to know what is going on in the youth justice system. The reason for that is – actually, I will not go through the text after text from people working inside the youth justice system who are genuinely scared working inside the system, who have seen changes inside youth justice which have effectively

handed too much power to young offenders inside. In places like Cherry Creek the staff do not have the opportunities to work with them, to discipline them and to force them into places for things like education and all the services they need. These kids can get away with what they were want to, and the mentality then comes out. What we do want to see are more opportunities for cultural engagement within the justice system, but I think, as I said before, education is probably one of the key ones we need within the custodial settings that we have got here in Victoria.

As I said at the start, we know that crime is still out of control here in Victoria. A 16-year-old boy was stabbed at a bus stop near a secondary school in Fraser Rise. This was on 23 August this year. I know down in Cranbourne and Cranbourne South we have had shootings and knife attacks. We have got police investigating a violent brawl involving machetes and firearms at a Melbourne shopping centre; this was just in the last few weeks as well. We have got 'Machete-wielding teens prompt large police operation in Brighton' – again that was just a few days ago. We know we have still got machetes on the street, we have still got kids running around with knives and we have got kids who are without fear that they are going to get locked up or remanded, and that is because this government has sent the message that effectively, 'It's okay. You can go in there. You'll get bail. You'll be back out as soon as you can.'

One of the other changes we would have liked to have seen is in relation to machetes here in Victoria. The government brought in a bill that made no change other than they could put it in the media and say they were pretending to do something. The reality is it made no change to how a machete could be purchased here in our state. I would invite you, Deputy Speaker, if you would like, to join me. We can go to Dandenong Market, and I can guarantee I could walk out with five machetes, walking through the Dandenong Market. The changes that were made did not do anything to make them a prohibited weapon, to stop the importation of them, to increase the penalties for people who are selling those machetes, to get them off our street. At the end of the day knife crime here in Victoria is something that we need to get on top of. The way to do that is to send a very, very strong message that we do not accept it and give the police the powers they need to ensure that they can get those knives off the street, not just from the young offenders who have got them at the end but from those who have been selling them in between. I think there are a whole lot of things we can do there.

Finally, I will go back to bail. The only way you are going to fix bail here in Victoria – there is only one alternative – is to bring back the bail laws that were here in March and prior. If you want to ensure that young violent offenders committing serious crimes in our state are not released but get the services they need within that system – that they are not released continuously, like they have been now eight, nine and 10 times to rack up 300 and 400 charges; to continuously steal cars or break into people's homes – if you want to see that change, the only way to do that is to reverse those bail laws and ensure that Victorians are kept safe. When the minister says his priority is community safety and his priority is keeping Victorians safe in their homes, on their streets or at work, if he wants to do that, he will need to support the coalition's change to bail and ensure we reverse that change made in March this year.

**Belinda WILSON** (Narre Warren North) (13:44): I do not think that in this chamber we are on the same page in agreeing that we want the best for our youth justice system. That is what these amendments to the Youth Justice Bill 2024 do. Today is a very important day. The bill makes amendments to the Bail Act 1977, and we will approve them today. I would say we all agree with that. Forcing kids to do things – we all parent differently, I guess. The member for Berwick and I are of a similar vintage and probably went through school at a similar time, and our children are also of a similar vintage. I am not sure forcing all the time always works, but we can agree to disagree on that.

I would first of all like to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleagues in the other place who were here till the wee hours of the morning last sitting week getting these amendments through. The member for Berwick brought up a number of different situations, and I personally believe that once we have these new laws in place we will see a dramatic decrease in a number of those things that he mentioned today. Our government is serious about youth justice. Our ministers have done an

incredible amount of work on this, and I commend them for the extraordinary amount of work they have done. They have listened to the professionals. They have listened to the police and the people in the youth justice system, and I really do commend and thank them for all the incredible work they have done. I have seen firsthand three incredible ministers, including our Attorney-General, who really put their heart and soul into this, and we are a better state and a better government for that.

I think that the Attorney-General's amendments to the Youth Justice Bill enhance the bail system – the other side may not agree with me – by making it clear that serious offences, such as aggravated burglary, home invasions, sexual offending and armed robbery, must be recognised for what they are, and that is that they are crimes that cause harm to our community. There were some comments made about whether we have met with people or seen it. I have spoken and met with people that have had home invasions. It is stressful and it is very upsetting. It is very, very distressful for many members of the community, and these laws will make some changes to that. They will ensure that our bail decision makers have more clarity around the risks of reoffending and that bail can be revoked. We are fostering a system that takes seriously the risks involved in offending and ensures that this is front and centre for all in consideration of bail. These bail laws make it clear that bail decision makers must assess the specific risk of a person committing a serious offence on release on bail as well as community safety generally, and I think that is also really, really important. The bill specifically calls out the serious behaviour of dangerous driving and the serious crimes of aggravated burglary, armed robbery, carjacking and home invasion as explicit examples of offences that present an unacceptable risk to our community and to our safety, and I think that is really important. I would like to commend this bill to the house.

**Michael O'BRIEN** (Malvern) (13:48): In rising to speak on these amendments I acknowledge the extreme bravery of the senior coach of the Carlton Football Club Michael Voss today, who managed to tackle youth offenders – one armed with a machete – who had crashed and overturned a car in Hawthorn this morning. I note that in making a citizen's arrest and apprehending a machete-wielding youth Michael Voss has done more to tackle crime in Victoria than this entire bill, because this bill does not take us forward and these amendments do not take us forward. Bail is still weaker in Victoria than it was in March this year. That is a fact; it is an unimpeachable fact. Bail is weaker in Victoria now than it was in March this year. How on earth does weakening Victoria's bail laws help keep anybody safe? The answer is it does not. It does not keep us safe at all.

Andrew Rule – the very respected crime reporter and author, I should say – wrote an article in the weekend in the *Herald Sun*. 'Invasion of the carjackers' is the title of this piece, and he refers to the fact that we have had this youth crime wave and we have had all these experts in the Labor government believing that it is something to be dismissed, that it is something not to be taken seriously. Andrew Rule wrote:

Police are still cagey about commenting in such a politically-charged debate, wary of criticism by crime deniers such as the state's attorney-general Jaclyn Symes, who last year scuppered controversial changes to youth bail reforms and was openly dismissive when asked about it.

"I do not want a discussion about a youth crime crisis that doesn't exist," Symes said.

Andrew Rule got it right. The Attorney-General is a crime denier. Too many members of the Labor government are crime deniers. They do not believe the evidence of their own eyes. They do not believe the evidence of the Crime Statistics Authority. They do not believe the evidence of Victoria Police.

We are suffering a youth crime crisis, and this government deliberately made it worse by weakening bail laws in March this year. We warned them. We said that was absolutely the wrong thing to do. When you send a message that you do not have to keep your bail conditions anymore, because it is not an offence to breach them, that sends exactly the wrong message about accountability. We need to make sure that when people are given the privilege of bail and conditions are attached to it, it comes with those conditions being enforceable. Instead this government said, 'No, let's not make conditions

something you have to keep. Let's not make breaking those conditions of bail an offence. Let's just make them a suggestion,' as though that is going to keep Victorians safe.

What absolute nonsense. Do you know what, despite the talks about backflips in these recent amendments, that remains the case. It is still not an offence to breach your bail conditions in Victoria. That is to this government's discredit, and it is to the risk of Victorians. The government made a big song and dance about it, saying, 'We might've abolished the offence of committing an indictable offence whilst on bail in March. The Liberals and Nationals opposed it vigorously, and we said they were wrong because we know what's right all the time because we're so smart.' Then what they have done is, 'Well, we're going to introduce a new offence, not an offence of committing indictable offence whilst on bail. We're going to introduce a new offence of committing a schedule 1 or schedule 2 indictable offence whilst on bail. We're going to kind of admit we got it wrong but not really.'

What is an indictable offence that is in schedule 1 or schedule 2 in the Bail Act? For example, it is true that if a young person or in fact any person – this does not just apply to young people – on bail goes out and robs a tobacconist, commits an armed robbery in a tobacconist, that is a schedule 2 offence. It means not only that is an additional offence but that they face a tougher test to get bail again, and that is the critical point. People would say common sense suggests that if somebody gets the privilege of bail and they breach that privilege by committing a serious offence they should face a tougher test to get bail again. Try and find anybody outside this place who would argue with that proposition. You are going to be looking for a long time. It is common sense that if somebody breaches the privilege of bail by committing a serious offence they should face a tougher test to get bail again.

That is what the law used to be. That is the law that was introduced by the Liberals and Nationals when we were last in government, and it is the law that was scrapped by the Labor government in March this year. But they cannot bring themselves to admit they got it completely wrong, so they have done a half-hearted pale imitation of the offence that used to be there. They have said it is only if you commit a schedule 1 or schedule 2 indictable offence that you will face a tougher test to get bailed again.

Get this: under Labor's law, under these amendments that are before the house, if you go and commit an armed robbery at a tobacconist, you face a tougher test to get bail again, but if you set fire to the tobacconist, you do not. It is okay in the eyes of the Labor government for somebody to set fire to a tobacconist, because that means you do not face a tougher test to get bail, but if you rob the tobacconist then you face a tougher test. Can anybody explain the logic in that to me? Can anybody explain the Labor logic in that proposition to me that it is okay to set fire to a tobacconist but it is not okay to rob one? That is the effect of this amendment. It makes no sense. There is no logic to it. Nobody who thinks these things through could conceivably believe that this makes any sense at all, yet this is the government's panacea to our youth crime crisis – a hodgepodge of rapidly thrown together, half-hearted measures that just will not work.

For members opposite to say, 'Oh, this is going to be the fix, and we expect to see youth crime coming down as a result of these changes' – they will not, because the government still refuses to give police the powers they need and the government still refuses to give courts the bail laws they need to keep Victorians safe. It is not going to change until the government changes, because this government has had plenty of opportunities over 10 years, and every time it pulls the wrong rein – every single time. Even in the face of a youth crime crisis and even in the face of the evidence, the government pulls the wrong rein every single time, and that puts Victorians at risk.

I commend the work of the member for Berwick, the Shadow Minister for Police. He and his office have done a power of work in this bill. Some of the amendments which are before the house now are opposition amendments, and I commend the Shadow Minister for Police for securing those. It makes a bad bill marginally better. That is all it does. This is still a bad bill. Raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 does not release one single 10- or 11-year-old from detention, because there are not any in there. That is why this whole thing has been a furphy. This is not about taking kids out of detention, because there are not any kids in detention. All it is doing is sending a message that

10- and 11-year-olds can do anything at all with no legal consequences. If they think that is going to get them on the right path sooner, I think the government is wrong. I think telling 10- and 11-year-olds that they can do anything they like with no legal accountability is actually guaranteed to keep them on the wrong path for longer, which is exactly the outcome we do not want to see as a community. It is exactly the wrong outcome, and now the government has walked back its promise to raise the age from 12 to 14 –

**James Newbury** interjected.

**Michael O'BRIEN:** For now. We will wait to see what happens. If we are unfortunate enough to suffer another Labor government after the next election, they may well change their mind again, because who would know. This government just blows in the wind when it comes to keeping Victorians safe. It is not their first priority at all. Their first priority is ideology, not common sense. Their first priority is what they are getting told by activist groups, not what the community or the police are telling them about what is needed to keep this state safe. That is why this bill is such a missed opportunity. This bill could have actually done more to tackle youth offending. This bill could have restored strong bail laws, which are what Victoria needs. This government has blown that chance, and in doing so this government has done nothing but put Victorians at further risk, weaken bail laws further and ensure that Victoria and Victorians will continue to be at risk.

**Matt FREGON** (Ashwood) (13:58): I also rise to speak on the amendments in front of us today. It occurs to me that in our debates often we argue at the extremes. That is a fairly common thing in this place, and I do not condemn the member for Malvern for doing it. But I think there is grey in a lot of this topic. It is a complicated topic, and I commend the members of the Council for bringing back to us what I think is an improved bill, one with amendments from multiple sides. I do not necessarily agree with the member for Malvern that this will not help. I think we will see that it does help, presuming it passes. We can compare notes, the member for Malvern and I, later. If any member in this house wishes to have a coffee with me in Strangers Corridor to talk about things we need to do in any aspect of this house going forward, I am always available to have a coffee, and I will shout. But I think –

*Members interjecting.*

**Matt FREGON:** Hang on – not all at once. Look, I am running out of time before question time. This is a bill that will help the state. This is a bill that will help community safety. The people that I represent and the people we all represent will be better off when we pass this bill. I have listened to the opposition, and I am not sure if they are going to support it or not. To my knowledge they have not said they will or they will not. So now is the time, with 2 seconds left, to show how you lead.

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

*Questions without notice and ministers statements*

**Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union**

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. Today thousands of union construction workers have taken an unauthorised industrial stoppage by walking off major government projects in support of the CFMEU. The Treasurer has called the mass walkout by CFMEU members 'unlawful'. Will the Premier do the same?

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I did not hear the question. Leader of the Opposition, just from the end of your question, please.

**John PESUTTO:** The Treasurer has called the mass walkout by CFMEU members 'unlawful'. Will the Premier do the same?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The reference to the Treasurer’s observations about the rally that is going on in capital cities around the country today is a characterisation that has been made by the Fair Work Commission that I agree with.

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): How much will today’s unlawful industrial stoppage add to the cost of Victoria’s infrastructure projects?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:03): We will continue to work with our construction partners to deliver Victoria’s transport infrastructure pipeline. Indeed, we will also work with our construction partners to deliver our health infrastructure pipeline, our record number of new school buildings –

**John Pesutto**: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, can you draw the Premier back to the question about how much industrial stoppages today will add to the cost of Victoria’s infrastructure projects?

**The SPEAKER**: I ask members not to repeat the question during a point of order. I ask the Premier to come back to the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN**: We will continue to work with our construction partners on delivering more transport infrastructure, removing level crossings, building more renewable energy projects and more homes, and we will continue to work with our partners to deliver these important projects for our city and state.

**James Newbury**: On a point of order, Speaker, firstly, the Premier is defying your ruling. We are on the first question of the day, and the Premier is again refusing to be relevant to the question.

**The SPEAKER**: Order! I ask you to be succinct in your points of order. The Premier has concluded her answer.

### Ministers statements: youth justice system

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (14:04): I rise to update the house on the landmark Youth Justice Bill 2024 that passed the Legislative Council last sitting week, proving of course that only an Allan Labor government can be trusted with the safety of the Victorian community. The bill made it crystal clear that serious repeat offenders face serious consequences for their actions, because community safety is not negotiable.

It is landmark legislation – the first standalone Youth Justice Bill in the country – that provides young people with more access to early intervention to keep them out of the justice system. This side of the house understands that not only do young people need to be treated in different ways, but they also need opportunities to turn their lives around when everything is going wrong. We know and we have made it clear that serious offences such as aggravated burglary, home invasions and armed robbery must be recognised for what they are, which is crimes that cause harm to our community. Following the passage of the bill in the Legislative Council, bail decision makers will need to consider both the risk to community safety and also the risk of serious further offending when assessing if bail is appropriate. And be in no doubt that, if you commit a serious crime on bail, Victoria Police have the powers they need to hold you to account and charge you with separate offences.

The Chief Commissioner of Police has stated that he expects these reforms, this legislation, to see more alleged offenders remanded for the offences that they commit. Only two weeks ago in this place those opposite criticised Victoria Police for supporting these reforms and this legislation. Can we just be very clear that some in this place have an opportunity to back community safety, but some in this place, such as the Leader of the Opposition, would rather lock up 10-year-olds and pander to his party room than stand up and support this bill and support community safety in this place. Shame on you.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the minister not to refer to ‘you’. You are reflecting on the Chair. It is the same with the Manager of Opposition Business.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, ministers statements are not an opportunity to attack the opposition, especially from a pack of crime deniers.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Manager of Opposition Business! I ask the Minister for Police to come back to his statement without attacking the opposition.

**Anthony CARBINES:** The Allan Labor government is showing leadership in backing Victoria Police in relation to this legislation, while those opposite in the libel party continue to pander to their backbench instead of showing leadership in the community. Weak!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Minister, that is unparliamentary language.

### Electricity infrastructure

**Peter WALSH** (Murray Plains) (14:07): My question is to the Premier. Last week hundreds of frustrated farmers travelled from across the state to Bendigo to raise legitimate concerns with the Premier. Why did the Premier fail to speak to these farmers?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:07): I thank the Leader of the National Party for his question. As part of being a proud representative of regional Victoria, I speak to members of regional communities on a regular basis, and that does include speaking with farmers and primary producers. Indeed, the Leader of the National Party knows that I was that morning speaking to farmers and primary producers, because he and I were in exactly the same meeting, where we were –

*Members interjecting.*

**Jacinta ALLAN:** Hang on. For the benefit of the house, we were on a unity ticket at this meeting. We were actually on a unity ticket at this meeting, where we were joining with representatives from local government, the primary producing sector and other representatives to talk about Victoria’s very strong position that we are putting to the federal government when it comes to the Murray–Darling Basin and how in the strongest possible terms we do not support the Commonwealth government’s position on buybacks.

**Peter Walsh:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier has had half her time to set the scene. I ask you to draw her back to the group of farmers that were at the lunch that wanted to talk to her, not those that were at the breakfast.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister for Transport Infrastructure will come to order. I am sure you do not want to be removed from question time again. The Premier was being relevant to the question on this occasion.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I was making the point to illustrate to the Leader of the National Party that speaking with regional communities, understanding their issues and meeting them in their own communities, which is also my community, is a really important part of the work we do. In terms of the lunch appointment, the Leader of the National Party was not at lunch, but there were people at the lunch who also raised the issues that were being raised by some who were not present at the formal lunch address I gave in Bendigo on Friday.

But my message to those who were in the room or outside the room is that no-one is more exposed to the impact of a changing climate than those of us who live and work and raise our families in regional communities. Whether you are a farmer, a primary producer, a small business owner, a manufacturer or someone who is raising their family, the impact of climate change on regional communities is real and is of grave concern to all of us, whether you look at the impact of natural disasters – more severe droughts, floods, fires and wind events that come through regional Victoria – or whether it is for



farmers and primary producers, who have got significant unpredictability in terms of forward rainfall. The Leader of the Nationals and I talked just last week about the impact of the drought in south-west Victoria, where communities like Edenhope and Portland and Casterton are experiencing the lowest rainfall on record over this winter period. Climate change is impacting regional communities right now, which is why we are working on a renewable energy transition which is providing more secure energy and also amongst the lowest energy prices in the wholesale market.

**Peter WALSH** (Murray Plains) (14:11): These hardworking farmers had hoped the Premier would listen to them. Instead she hid inside and spoke about them. Given the Premier will not speak directly to these farmers, will she restore their rights of appeal to VCAT about the planning decisions that affect them?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:12): I am rejecting the preamble to the Leader of the National Party’s question. On the latter part of the question in terms of rights, there has been no change to the third-party appeal rights that people have –

**A member** interjected.

**Jacinta ALLAN**: Sorry, let me start that again. The planning minister is going to correct that.

*Members interjecting.*

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

**James Newbury**: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is required to be factual. The Premier put a press release out which is directly in contrast to what she said. Factually the Premier is wrong.

**The SPEAKER**: There is no point of order.

**Jacinta ALLAN**: I am absolutely happy to clarify that there continues to be the opportunity for local landowners to have a voice as part of the planning process, but also we have gone further than that. What we are also doing –

**James Newbury**: On a point of order, Speaker, this question asked about restoring VCAT rights. It was not about any other issue, and I would ask you to bring the Premier to that question.

**The SPEAKER**: The Premier will come back to the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN**: In recognising that for landowners the delivery of transmission does have an impact on their property, the minister for energy has already announced payments of \$8000 per kilometre every year for 25 years to those landowners.

**James Newbury**: On a further point of order, Speaker, again on relevance, deferring to your ruling, the Premier is ignoring your ruling and has not dealt with the substance of the question.

**The SPEAKER**: I ask the Premier to come back to the question, but I do remind the Manager of Opposition Business that I cannot compel or direct the Premier how to answer the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN**: It is in that context that the government will not be changing its position on that matter.

### Ministers statements: Metro Tunnel

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS** (Dandenong – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:15): It is my pleasure to rise today to update the house on the many ways that the Metro Tunnel will transform the way Victorians move around our state. Since 2014 we have added more than 2000 new services operating each week across our train network, and the Metro Tunnel will allow us to keep adding services for years to come, which is very important in keeping pace with our growing community. The tunnel will also open up direct train

access to new parts of our city for the very first time, including of course the University of Melbourne, the Parkville medical precinct and the St Kilda Road employment hub.

But importantly the Metro Tunnel is also fundamentally about changing the way people move around our city. Like all great cities, Melbourne will be a city of interchange, benefiting from an increasingly integrated public and active transport network. Alongside the Metro Tunnel, we have been investing in new bus interchanges, and there are many behind me who have benefited from those and some over there as well. We have also been investing in new level-access tram stops and new bike parking at transport hubs, and I know the member for Cranbourne was very pleased about hers, at Cranny station. This will make it more convenient than ever to interchange from a train or a tram to a bus or a bike for the rest of your journey home.

Those opposite cut services and made it harder for Victorians to get around, and they never had a plan for the future. While they are focused on themselves and on each other –

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, this is the second minister who has abused the rules of this place. They cannot use ministers statements to attack the opposition.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I ask you to direct your point of order at the beginning.

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On the point of order, Speaker, there is no point of order. It is entirely reasonable to compare and contrast this government with the previous government, which is what the minister was doing.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask the minister to come back to her ministers statement.

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS:** With pleasure, Speaker. This government remains focused on giving Victorians more options to get to where they need to go. Whether that be education or work or medical appointments or recreational venues, we have got more ways to get there. Only Labor plans for the future, and the Metro Tunnel is another example of that.

### Suburban Rail Loop

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:17): My question is to the Premier. Will the Suburban Rail Loop be rephased?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:17): Our government has committed to the Victorian community at two elections to deliver the Suburban Rail Loop East by 2035, and we are on track to deliver on that commitment.

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:18): Earlier this year the Premier said about the Suburban Rail Loop that:

By 2026, we'll have ... major construction underway at every one of the six station sites.

Will this construction timeline be met?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:18): As I said in my previous answer to the Leader of the Opposition, the Suburban Rail Loop East is on track to be completed by 2035. As part of hitting that timeline, of course, tunnel-boring machines will be in the ground by –

**John Pesutto:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I ask that you draw the Premier back to what was a very narrow question, about 2026.

**The SPEAKER:** I believe the Premier on this occasion was being relevant.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** As I was saying, there will be tunnel-boring machines in the ground by 2026. I would invite the Leader of the Opposition right now to take a journey to Cheltenham, Box Hill, Mount Waverley, Glen Waverley or Clayton, any one of our six –

**A member** interjected.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** or Burwood, do not let me forget Burwood – where he will see right now that there is work underway at all six of those station sites as we get on and deliver the Suburban Rail Loop. Of course Victorians know there is only one side of this house that supports it and that those opposite want to scrap the project and the jobs and the train services it will deliver.

**Ministers statements: Metro Tunnel**

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:20): I rise to update the house on exciting projects in Parkville set to transform the way in which Victorians receive world-class care in this state. The Metro Tunnel project will connect more Victorians to our world-class hospitals and health services. Thanks to record investment from the Allan Labor government, we know that our Parkville precinct is home to some of the world's best hospitals, from groundbreaking cancer treatments at Peter Mac to world-class trauma care at Royal Melbourne. For all the mums and bubs and kids who use the Royal Women's and the Royal Children's, thousands of Victorians get the health care that they need at this precinct, and now we are making it easier to access that care. Country Victorians rely on our specialist services too. Melbourne Metro will make it easier for people from my electorate and from all of those representing regional Victoria here to access the care that they need from our specialist services. With a station at Parkville, Metro Tunnel will deliver patients straight to the health care that they need by train.

It is good for patients and it is good for their loved ones, but it is also good for the tens of thousands of healthcare workers who travel every single day to work in this precinct. Our nurses, our midwives, our doctors and our allied healthcare workers but also our cooks, our cleaners, our scientists and our medical researchers for the first time will have a turn-up-and-go service delivering them to their workplaces. This is going to be an absolute game changer for these healthcare workers. I cannot wait to ride the train with some of those healthcare workers. On this side of the house we will always stand with our healthcare workers; we will not be going to war with them. We will always invest in public health care; we will not cut, close and privatise, which is what those on the other side of the house do.

**Metro Tunnel**

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (14:22): My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Labor's secret letter to companies building the Metro Tunnel said that it 'represents the state's counter offer to settle project issues'. What are the specific project issues?

**Danny PEARSON** (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:22): I am delighted to answer the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's question. As we have indicated today, the Metro Tunnel is a transformational project which will completely transform the way Victorians get around this great state. In relation to the letter that was published in the *Age* today, the point I made this morning I will make again: there is no deal that has been agreed to. Conversations are ongoing with our construction partners. Those conversations are occurring in good faith.

**David Southwick:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I ask you to ask the minister to come back to answering the question about what the specific project issues are.

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On the point of order, Speaker, there is no point of order. I ask that you rule the member for Caulfield's attempted point of order out of order. The minister was being entirely responsive to the question. He was being relevant, he was being accurate and he was being succinct, and I ask that you let him get on with answering the question.

**James Newbury:** Further to the point of order, Speaker, the Leader of the House has asserted that the minister was being responsive to the question. I do not think the government has been responsive to any question ever. The minister was not in any way responsive to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** On the point of order, the minister was being relevant in the sense that he was referring to the Metro Tunnel and a secret letter. However, I ask him to come back to the specific question.

**Danny PEARSON:** We are at the most complex phase of the Metro Tunnel project. We have got two stations down and three stations to go. In relation to the two stations in the CBD, these are really complex builds. It is like keyhole surgery, and we are building these stations right in the heart of the city underground. The test trains have travelled more than 20,000 kilometres to date, and we have got another 150,000 to go. As I have indicated, we are working closely with our construction partners in good faith.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the minister is abusing your ruling. You have asked him to come back to the question –

**The SPEAKER:** I did ask the minister to come back to the question, but as I said before, I cannot compel or direct the minister how to answer the question.

**Danny PEARSON:** So, as I indicated, we are working with our construction partners in good faith. When an agreement is reached, it will be reported in the usual way. But I want to make the point, given the sensitive commercial nature of these discussions, it would be inappropriate to make any further comment. As I indicated this morning, no agreement has been reached. Construction is occurring in good faith and –

**David Southwick:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question. He defied your earlier ruling, and he is going down the same path again.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, come back to the question.

**Danny PEARSON:** I simply will not jeopardise the position of the state in these discussions. I will not. The reality is that we are continuing to work closely with our construction partners. In the event there is an agreement that is reached, it will be reported and disclosed in the usual way.

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (14:26): How much did the companies building the Metro Tunnel demand in their commercial settlement proposal offered in March to settle the project issues?

**Danny PEARSON** (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:26): I refer back to my answer to the substantive question. I am not going to be drawn on the specifics of these discussions. We are working in good faith with our construction partners. Those conversations are ongoing, and in the event that there is any change to that contract, that will be disclosed in the usual way.

**John Pesutto:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question is not about what the state's position is; it is what the subject matter of the dispute is. The minister in both answers is confirming there are issues in dispute. Why can't he be drawn back to that and disclose those? Telling this Parliament what the issues in dispute are will not jeopardise negotiations.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! A point of order is not an opportunity to make a statement to the house. The minister has concluded his answer.

#### Ministers statements: Metro Tunnel

**Danny PEARSON** (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:27): I rise to update the house on the Metro Tunnel project, a project we are getting on with and those opposite cancelled. The Metro Tunnel is a game changer for the way in which Victorians get around our city, making it easier and, importantly, making it more convenient to use our public transport network. We have connected the Sunbury line in the west and the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines in the south-east through five world-class, elite new stations.

For the very first time, Victorians will have train services at the doorstep of St Kilda Road's commercial precinct as well as Parkville's world-class health, education and research precinct. Of course we are delivering a new Arden station to kickstart growth in this suburb so more people can live closer to where they work and play. Daily commutes will be quicker and easier for workers heading to the St Kilda Road precinct from Sunshine, from Footscray, from Narre Warren or from Cranbourne, saving time, and there will be more convenient access to work via Anzac station for the very first time. I know members will be delighted to know that for the very first time students right across the state will be able to catch the train to RMIT and Melbourne University, making it quicker and easier to get to class each day.

The project is at its most complex stage, with two new stations built deep below the heart of the CBD. Like keyhole surgery, this is being done with minimal interruptions to our CBD. But it was too hard for those opposite. That is why they axed this project and they walked away from our western suburbs. It was all too hard for those opposite when they had the opportunity. They kicked it down the road. They said in 2017 it was a hoax. They said there was all this talk and not any action.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, again the minister is using a ministers statement to attack the opposition.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask the minister not to attack the opposition in his ministers statement.

**Danny PEARSON:** We do not shy away from the hard work, and we are making great progress. Just think, we are going to get on and deliver this project. The Allan Labor government will deliver this project in 2025, 12 months ahead of schedule.

### Metro Tunnel

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Minister, the cost of the Metro Tunnel has already blown out by at least \$4 billion. Is the additional \$888 million in secret top-up payments reported today in addition to the previously known cost blowouts?

**Danny PEARSON** (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:30): The project has been disclosed in the budget papers as costing \$12.6 billion. I would note, if those opposite had not cancelled the project in 2010, Victorians would be using the metro right now and it would have cost a lesser amount. That is just the reality of the situation.

**John Pesutto:** On a point of order, Speaker, I ask that you draw the minister back to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister will come back to the question.

**Danny PEARSON:** There has been no agreement reached with our construction partners. In the event there is an agreement with our construction partners reached, that will be disclosed in the normal way and it will be publicised.

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (14:31): Can the minister guarantee that the project will not blow out by more than another \$888 million?

**Danny PEARSON** (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:31): What I will say is that I will guarantee this project is going to be delivered by the Allan Labor government, I will guarantee we will not cut this project and I will guarantee that I will not jeopardise the commercial position of the state.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, I do not know what he is doing, but he is not answering the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I think the minister was being relevant. The minister has concluded his answer.

**Ministers statements: Metro Tunnel**

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:32): Our government promised Victorians that we would get on and build the Metro Tunnel, and that is exactly what we are doing today. Why are we doing this with such determination? As we have heard from a number of my colleagues over the course of this afternoon, this is a project that absolutely must be delivered because of the significant benefits that it delivers for Victorians travelling across the state. Even more than that, this is a project that is going to be delivered a full year ahead of schedule.

*Members interjecting.*

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

**Member for Mildura withdrew from chamber.**

**Jacinta ALLAN:** Plus, Victorians, when they are travelling on the Metro Tunnel, will be able to use one of our fantastic high-capacity metro trains that are manufactured right here in Victoria. They are not being made in Korea. Those opposite would have shipped our train manufacturing industry offshore. They are being proudly made here in Victoria because we require this. New trains in a tunnel that is running beneath the city, new technology and five underground stations is what the Metro Tunnel is delivering. Even better than that, there are the 7000 jobs that are being supported right now because we are delivering productive infrastructure today that will support our growing city and the state for the future. Those opposite cancelled this project. They walked away from this project. It was all a bit hard.

**John Pesutto:** On a point of order, Speaker, ministers statements are not an opportunity to criticise the opposition.

**The SPEAKER:** Premier, I ask you to refrain from criticising the opposition.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** It is a statement of fact. Those opposite cancelled this project, and when you build nothing, like those opposite did, you send the economy backwards.

**The SPEAKER:** Question time has ended. We will now move to constituency questions.

**Bridget Vallance:** On a point of order, Speaker, I have a number of questions that remain outstanding. To be answered by the Minister for Skills and TAFE are questions 1135, 1137, 1138, 1139, 1140, 1141, 1148, 1149, 1151, 1215, 1220, 1221, 1222, 1227, 1229, 1231, 1233, 1234 and 1235. And unanswered questions from the Minister for Jobs and Industry are questions 1216, 1223 and 1240. These 22 questions remain unanswered. I raised a point of order on these exact 22 questions last sitting week, and they still remain unanswered.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask you to hand your list to the Clerk.

**Martin Cameron:** On a point of order, Speaker, I have the following questions awaiting responses, some of which are almost 12 months late: question 272 to the Minister for Regional Development; question 253, an adjournment matter to the Minister for Housing; and question 1331 to the Minister for Mental Health. I ask that you follow up these, please.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask you to pass your list to the Clerk.

**Roma Britnell:** On a point of order, Speaker, this is the third time I have raised this point of order with you, and you have even written to the Minister for Health on two occasions. I have no doubt it will be three occasions after this. The minister is thumbing her nose at my constituents, you and the parliamentary process. It is a simple question. It is question 660: can the minister categorically rule out mergers of health services in South-West Coast?

**The SPEAKER:** Please pass your list to the Clerk.

*Constituency questions*

**Berwick electorate**

**Brad BATTIN** (Berwick) (14:38): (770) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport. The information I am seeking is: what process do schools in my electorate of Berwick have to go through to get dedicated school bus services? We have a real problem in the area, especially through Clyde North, where the existing public bus services just cannot get the kids to school on time because the connections just are not there – and if they are, they are often so full that the buses drive past the kids waiting at bus stops. One mother has recently told us that from Clyde North it means it takes her over 2 hours each way by the public bus to the Kambrya high school, which is just over a 20-minute walk away from the bus stop, having to change buses several times. One father told our office last week that he has had to sell his house in Clyde North and move closer to Kambrya all because of the public bus services' inability to serve the Clyde North community effectively. Parents in Clyde North are screaming out for dedicated bus routes. We want the Minister for Education to ask about this process as well.

**Kororoit electorate**

**Luba GRIGOROVITCH** (Kororoit) (14:39): (771) My question is for the Minister for Health. It comes after a lot of hype in Melton and Kororoit, and my good friend the member for Melton can attest to that. Can the minister please outline the benefits of the new Melton hospital for my constituents in Kororoit and of course the member for Melton's constituents in Melton? As we know, my electorate of Kororoit is currently home to the fastest growing LGA in Australia. With families moving to my patch in droves, starting construction this year is absolutely crucial. A brand new Melton hospital will deliver the services and supports that are needed for the growing and diverse communities across Melbourne's west. It will ensure the people get the care that they need close to home. Many of my constituents are not only eager to see this project get underway; they also want to understand how this development will benefit them and their families when it comes to providing job opportunities and services to their community.

**Gippsland South electorate**

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (14:39): (772) My question is to the Minister for Environment, and I ask: why was Bear Gully Campground in the Cape Liptrap Coastal Park closed last year for a period of 10 months? I am very aware and the community is aware that there was a cultural heritage issue and that in correspondence the minister has advised that Parks Victoria was working with First Peoples–State Relations to assess potential impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage materials at the campground. But the question I am asking is: what exactly was it? We have had that Bear Gully Campground operating for around a hundred years. It is a much-loved and very popular campground. Not only was the campground closed but the access to the beach in the area was also closed. It is important that if the community is to maintain a level of faith in cultural heritage processes we have some transparency on this issue, so I would ask the minister to explain why the Bear Gully Campground was in fact closed.

**Narre Warren South electorate**

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (14:40): (773) My question is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport regarding the recent upgrades at Merinda Park station. Minister, how will the improvements at Merinda Park station assist my community in my electorate of Narre Warren South? I recently had the pleasure of welcoming the minister to Merinda Park to inspect the completed works, which include the new three-bay bus interchange, upgraded footpaths, 119 new car parking spaces and improved safety features. This is in addition to the Labor government's rebuild of the station back in 2022. I thank the minister for her visit and continued investment in public transport services and infrastructure in our area. We are getting people where they need to be easier, faster and safer. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

**Rowville electorate**

**Kim WELLS** (Rowville) (14:41): (774) My question is to the Minister for Energy and Resources. There has been a lot of debate in this chamber and in the Legislative Council about state Labor's attempt to lower energy costs for Victorians and residents in my electorate of Rowville. One resident in my electorate, Glenn, has received yet another notice that the cost of gas is going up again. So on behalf of Glenn, who wants to know: when will the minister actually address the rising cost of gas during this cost-of-living crisis? Clearly not enough is being done on the already crippling gas prices that residents are facing. Since 2020 the price of gas has risen by more than 150 per cent in Australia, adding to the cost-of-living crisis for many Victorians and those living in the electorate of Rowville.

**Lara electorate**

**Ella GEORGE** (Lara) (14:42): (775) My question is for the Minister for Children: how are the Allan Labor government's Best Start, Best Life reforms benefiting the Lara electorate? The Allan Labor government is investing \$14 billion to give Victorian children the best start in life. Last week I was lucky enough to visit one of the incredible early learning centres in the Lara electorate, Jenny's ELC. Chloe and the team run a wonderfully engaging centre, and the kids were an absolute delight. My visit was made extra special by the fact it was Book Week. There were some fantastic Disney princesses floating about and lots of other incredible costumes. It was great to meet the team and know that our government are supporting centres just like this, where we are setting up our youngest Victorians for their futures. My community are grateful for this support. So once again I ask the minister: how are the Allan Labor government's Best Start, Best Life reforms benefiting the Lara electorate?

**Brunswick electorate**

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (14:43): (776) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. In February last year 22-year-old Brunswick Cycling Club member Angus Collins was killed at the intersection of the Footscray Road trail and Dock Link Road. Angus was riding straight ahead on a green light, his vision blocked by a concrete pillar, just as a cement truck turned left on a green light, crossed the trail and killed him. The *Age* reported that the government and subcontractors had ignored warnings about this intersection. The risks of simultaneous green lights, found at multiple intersections, have been repeatedly highlighted by coroner David Ryan, and in June last year the minister informed me that her department was 'working to review these at a network level'. How does the government plan to address the risks posed by simultaneous green lights for separated bike lanes and left-turning traffic?

**Hastings electorate**

**Paul MERCURIO** (Hastings) (14:44): (777) Eight years ago, in 2016, medicinal cannabis was legalised in Victoria thanks to the Andrews Labor government, and this year the Allan Labor government announced a world-first trial to study prescribed medicinal cannabis users driving on a dedicated track. My constituent question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, what work is currently being undertaken to progress this trial? Many people from all walks of life suffer ongoing, consistent, chronic pain. The only thing that can alleviate that pain is medicinal cannabis. Many people who take medicinal cannabis have a genuine need to drive. The cruel irony of this is that, although it is a legally prescribed medication, if a chronic pain sufferer is pulled over for a roadside drug test and tests positive for THC, the consequences are severe, with fines and the loss of their licence. A loss of licence may impact their ability to keep their job, their income, their independence, their home and their hope. I look forward to hearing from the minister.

**Euroa electorate**

**Annabelle CLEELAND** (Euroa) (14:45): (778) My question is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport: when will the minister review the Kilmore town link bus service to better align with the Kilmore East train timetable? This bus service is meant to conveniently connect passengers from



the Kilmore East train station, located 4 kilometres from the town centre, but students from Project Ready recently highlighted the impact the lack of alignment is having. While waiting for the bus to arrive, groups of Broadford Secondary College students are left to wait at a station that only has a two-seat shelter for all passengers for up to an hour each day.

Project Ready is an outstanding program that is helping students transition from secondary school to work or further education, and one of their priorities is to advocate for improved public transport in the region. While they would ideally like to see a train station in Kilmore, an alternative solution is to ensure the town link bus is better connected to the train timetable. A review of this service would ensure these students are not missing out on class time and are not left stranded at the station for extended periods. Thank you, Kaylee, Sharna, Taj, Charlotte, Jade, Sophie, Celeste, Tori and Charlotte for raising the issue with me.

### **Bellarine electorate**

**Alison MARCHANT** (Bellarine) (14:46): (779) My question is for the Minister for Emergency Services. As the summer draws closer, how is the Allan Labor government preparing the Bellarine electorate ahead of fire season? The days have been getting longer and the weather has been warming up and showing clear signs that we are getting closer to summer. But this also comes with an acknowledgement that we are getting closer to the prevailing time of the year which includes fires. On the Bellarine this year we welcomed a new medium tanker to the Leopold fire brigade thanks to funding from the volunteer emergency services equipment program, and two of our local schools recently were granted funding under the bushfire preparedness vegetation program to support at-risk schools for fire prevention. But it is important to the Bellarine community to also know what preventative plans are in place ahead of these summer months.

### ***Bills***

### **Youth Justice Bill 2024**

#### *Council's amendments*

#### **Debate resumed.**

**Matt FREGON** (Ashwood) (14:47): I will make a slightly small contribution because I think there are many speakers who want to get up on these amendments as they are important, and I hope we all want to see them passed. The member for Morwell did say earlier that he hoped to see them pass, so I hope that was a flag that both sides are going to see this through. The bail amendments here acknowledge, regardless of rhetoric that has sometimes come from the other side, that there is an issue in our community with youth offenders who are over 14, as I think the member for Berwick was saying earlier, who are offending and then offending again. I think we have got to remember that if you are up for bail – if you do not get it or you do get it – you have not been found guilty of an offence. You do not get bail in sentencing; you get bail before you are found guilty or not guilty. Surely we in this house all think that the presumption of innocence is a foundation that we want to keep in our justice system. I would be very surprised if any of us think that that is something that should change.

With that said, there is also an equally important aspect of community safety that, as the Minister for Police said before, we need to identify, and when we have a very small number of young offenders who are basically off the rails and not paying attention to anything, forcing or not forcing, we have to do something about it. These amendments ensure that our bail decision makers, who are not those of us in this room – we have separate pillars for a reason – have more clarity around what we expect and what the community expects us to tell them to expect when bail can be revoked, and we are fostering a system that takes this very seriously. We are making it clear to these decision-makers that they must assess the risks of repeat offending when deciding if bail should be granted, and I think that is what we would all expect.

It may be quite evident to all that there are expectations from the opposition here to do things differently – to go further, however you want to put it – but these changes I believe will have an effect for the good of our community, and I encourage the house to pass these, to allow them to be enacted for the benefit of our communities that we all represent. Let us do both sides of the equation. As the member for Berwick said, none of us want to see an 11-year-old in prison. They are primary school kids. That is the line we are drawing here – pretty well primary school, secondary school. Nobody wants to see what happened in Hawthorn this morning and what happened in my district a month or two ago and what happened in Doncaster. This is complicated, and these youths are very complicated, the ones who are doing this. We must acknowledge that for community safety in these cases these kids need to be in remand, because by the third, fourth, fifth – I do not know how many times – even second, 12th, 13th; I do not know. The point is our decision-makers are being sent a message today that the community expects the risk to that community to be taken into consideration when bail is considered. That is what this bill does, and I encourage all members to vote for its speedy passage.

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:51): What we are considering today are amendments to law which will go only half of the way or part of the way to trying to fix the mistakes that this current government made. This government watered down the law – that is what this current government did – and it was the current Premier that did it. At the time the coalition strongly spoke out about what was being proposed. The coalition knew the effect and impact of those changes, and the government did not listen. The government said, ‘We know better. We’re deaf to these concerns and there will be no impact.’ What we know is that there have been hundreds of people who have been affected by crime who would not have been had these changes not occurred earlier in the year. That is a fact. We also know that three people have died.

Earlier this year the coalition called out what the government was proposing to do and the government ignored it. I would say to them again today that what the government is proposing to do today will not fix the problem. The government will not fix the problem with the amendments they are passing, and the community knows it. The only difference now is the community knows it and the government has been politically pushed by the right – who are briefing – to amend the law. That is what has happened. This is an attempted political fix by part of Labor’s party room in response to what the community knows is a youth crime crisis.

In my particular community we are very aggrieved because over two years ago the former Premier told us as a community that we did not understand what we were talking about when we said there was a crisis starting to occur in our community. The former Premier victim-blamed anybody who stood up, and he said that we did not understand. Victoria Police have since confirmed that the youth crime crisis in Victoria started in my electorate. Victoria Police have confirmed that. So the former Premier, who knew better than everybody else, who said that we did not understand what we were talking about – shame on him – got it wrong, and hundreds of people have been victims as a result.

**Danny Pearson** interjected.

**James NEWBURY**: I tell you what, if the former Premier is anything like Elvis, he is a pig of a man.

**The SPEAKER**: Order! Member for Brighton, that is unparliamentary language.

**James NEWBURY**: Thank you, Speaker, whether or not it is true. The amendments we are dealing with today will not fix the problems in the youth crime crisis that is occurring in our community, and the community knows it. This half-baked political fix, which is all it is, being pushed by the right, who are briefing out from cabinet on their little wins –

*Members interjecting.*

**James NEWBURY**: We know that these amendments will not fix what has been a 146 per cent increase in aggravated burglaries in homes in the time of this government – a 146 per cent increase in

aggravated burglaries, an almost 20 per cent increase over the last year. It is massively more in my community, but the average across this state is almost 20 per cent. We are talking about the most serious of crimes, where you wake up – oftentimes in my community people are sleeping, their families are sleeping, their little kids are sleeping – and find a gang in your home with very big weapons. It must be one of the worst possible crimes a parent can face. Having spoken to more victims than I could possibly go through, I know it is a deeply scarring event, not just for the short term but a crime that stays with victims for a very long time. I regularly talk to victims after the event and they talk to me about the long-term impact they bear, the way they cannot sleep and the types of mental health anguish they go through purely because the government watered down the law and as a result repeat offenders have been let out again and again and again and again and again – more than 10 times is not uncommon.

The changes before us today still do not make breaching bail an offence. The reason why I can say with great sadness that these amendments will not fix the problem is because the offenders who are committing the worst offences know that if they breach bail, it does not matter. There is literally no punishment. It does not matter. Shame on the government. This crime crisis will get worse and it will continue because the fix will not solve the problem. This is a political fix; that is what it is. It is nothing more than a political fix. It is the only type of fix that could get through their party room. That is what this fix is. You could see a massive difference between the Minister for Police and the Attorney-General – a clear difference in views of what they wanted to see in terms of changes or not at all, but the community had spoken. Only on Friday, at a quarter to 4 in the afternoon, there was a knife fight in the main street in my community. Chairs were being thrown and bottles were being thrown. Only minutes later I talked to people who were there when it happened, and there were mums with little kids walking along the street who were dodging a knife fight in the middle of the street. These types of crimes are not uncommon.

People have often heard me talk in this place about the crimes that have been happening in my community – crimes that are now occurring in other parts of the community. These crimes are real, and for too long this government has denied these crimes, watered down the laws and not fixed the problem. Though we see an attempted political fix now, which will not solve the problem, what we know is the community has worked it out, because they are seeing the crimes. Only today you saw in Hawthorn that example raised by a number of members – a car flipped and someone being forced to make a citizen's arrest on their morning coffee run. How can this occur and the government not want to fix it? That is what I would ask. How can these crimes continue to occur and the government not want to solve it and fix it properly? We will see these crimes continue, terribly and sadly, and we will see a continuing repeat of offences, because the laws do not put in place a proper series of protections for the community or disincentives for repeat behaviour. This political fix, which has only just been an agreement that the left in the government's party room would agree to, we know will not solve the problem. Shame on the government for their behaviour over the last two years, for denying these crimes, for watering down these laws and for seeing Victorian victims continue to be hurt by this crime crisis.

**Paul EDBROOKE** (Frankston) (15:02): I will keep my comments quite brief, because I know there are quite a few people that would like to speak on this. It has been quite an inconsistent conversation, I think, this morning in this house. We have heard from the member for Berwick, who had quite a few good points, talking about forcing kids to learn and forcing kids to do things. Look, being a former teacher and a parent, I am not sure that I really condone that. I do not think it works. I am sure that actually engaging youth on another level is probably the process and policy that most of the people that work with our youth work with. They do not want to handcuff them to a chair and make them learn. It just does not work that way. We have had the Shadow Attorney-General wanting to introduce offences that do not even apply to youth, and we are here talking about our Youth Justice Bill 2024 and the amendments.

The real inconsistency for me, though – or maybe it is just being unlucky – was the Shadow Attorney-General turning to Michael Voss and him tackling some offenders today. I like Vossy. He has coached a lot of good football players, he has been a premiership-winning coach and hopefully he gets lauded as a hero. It is just a pity that he was not on Denham Street, Hawthorn, where the incident happened this morning, on a night in October 2021, when a certain young man crashed his Jaguar into a fence at double the legal BAC. I am sure that Vossy could have got the former member for Kew before he got into his car and maybe said, ‘Listen, mate, it’s not a good idea. You’ve had a skinful. You’ve had a couple of sherberts, a couple of frothies. It’s not a good time to get in your Jaguar.’

**Cindy McLeish:** On a point of order, Speaker, I am struggling to see how the member’s contribution relates to the amendments.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Frankston, I am not sure either, so perhaps you could come back to the amendments. I am sure you were leading to them.

**Paul EDBROOKE:** Why don’t you like Michael Voss? Everyone likes Michael Voss. I think that would have been a good thing, some coaching.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I think a reference was made by a previous speaker to that same event, so the member for Frankston to continue.

**Paul EDBROOKE:** I will get back to the amendments. It is very clear to me that the member for Malvern, the Shadow Attorney-General, is politicising things a bit or just does not understand the difference between the offence the government’s amendments introduce and the one he has continuously sought to bring back – that is, the offence of committing an indictable offence while on bail. Our focus here on this side of the chamber is ensuring that there are serious consequences for serious offending – high-harm, high-impact offending. This is why under our amendments those who commit a serious offence, as outlined in schedules 1 and 2 of the Bail Act 1977, will be able to be charged with a standalone offence.

You would think from what we have heard this afternoon that those on the other side of the chamber disagree with these amendments. In light of the fact that the upper house, or the other place, has actually agreed to these, we expect that those on the other side of the chamber will later this day as well. The offence we are talking about – the offence we are introducing, the standalone offence – does not capture the low-level, nonviolent offences that the proposed offence from those opposite would. We know that the proposed offence from those opposite would significantly contribute to over-representation of nonviolent and vulnerable offenders in our judicial system.

The Shadow Attorney-General’s proposal also sought to reintroduce the offence of contravening a conduct condition while on bail. I am sure all members of this place are aware that the bill we are discussing is a Youth Justice Bill, which is why it is very curious that the Shadow Attorney-General is proposing to reintroduce an offence that does not apply to children in a Youth Justice Bill. I would remind those opposite that they actually supported this offence being removed in the previous bail reforms this year; they never moved an amendment to keep it. It is one thing to be in here with faux outrage today, but another thing we know is that you are going to actually vote for this bill. I would say to those opposite, who seem today to be putting themselves in a bit of a box – ‘We’re the victims. We haven’t said this. You’ve told us and made us out to be something we’re not’ – that no-one has done that. You have done that yourselves. You have done that with your decisions. You have done that with what you have said in the past in regard to this bill. These amendments have been passed by the upper house. They will be agreed to, I think, in this chamber, and I commend them to the house.

**Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (15:07):** I too rise to make a contribution to the Youth Justice Bill 2024. I note that we have some 67 amendments – which is quite a lot of amendments, actually – that got dealt with in the other place, which took a very long time. I commend those in the other place who worked through those, because it is a very difficult process. In those amendments there are some that the opposition put forward, which is most pleasing, and some the government owned that the

opposition started off initially. There are some house ones, and there are some that the Greens put forward. But I think the most important thing to remember here is that bail in Victoria is easier to get now than it was in March this year, and the community is not safer. There are no incentives for community safety. There are certainly no disincentives for those doing the offending.

I have listened to the speakers on the government side and watched as some of them have read through their prepared notes, and clearly they have drunk the Kool Aid. They have those prepared notes, and they need to have something to say about the issue of youth justice, because we know the issue of youth crime is something that so many of us as members of Parliament hear about time and time again. Not only do we see it in the media, but we have people who talk to us to say how worried they are and how scared they are to be in some places on the streets and how you can easily be an innocent victim of crime being in your house at night when your house is broken into or when your car is stolen and it is used when they are racing through the streets and posing dangers as they go through red lights and speed excessively, putting their own lives and anyone else who is near them in danger as well.

I have heard the government say the government is serious about youth justice, and I am really not sure that that is the case, because the bill before us and the amendments before us do not address the youth crime crisis. If we have a look at those, we do have some positives around impact statements, which I will talk about a little later, but we still have the issue of the victims of crime – those who have been offended against – and how stressful that is and how that can have long-term psychological impacts for people. People may not leave their house and not go about their normal day-to-day duties because they are so worried about what might happen because it has happened already. Sometimes people experience these more than once.

On the disincentives for the offenders, are they going to stop doing what they are doing because of these amendments and because of the bill before the house? They know they can breach bail. They know that they can get away with it, so I am really not sure that this is going to make much difference there. I think we have all said here that we agree that for those on this path it is a pretty tragic and very destructive path, for so many young people particularly. The programs to help those young people – to move them, to change their behaviours, to change the people that they hang out with – need quite a lot of work, and I am not sure that this bill here really does look at the core issues there.

The government really cannot claim here to have tightened the bail laws when they have actually weakened them, and as I said at the start, it is easier to get bail now in Victoria than it was in March of this year. It might be not okay to rob somebody, but it is okay perhaps to burn down tobacco shops in this context. We have heard this time and time again. Every day there is a new tobacco shop that has been burnt down because of the offences that are happening.

When you look at what has been put forward here, it is not the sort of thing that is going to stop one type of offence. Here these amendments propose that every person under 18 have unlimited options for cautions and diversions. Unlimited options – that is not a good thing. And as I have said, for repeat offenders the message is simple: under Labor in Victoria you can continue to commit a crime and get away with it. We have heard of those who get bail on eight, nine, 10 occasions, and we heard the example from Gippsland earlier of it now being somebody's first time being remanded. Perhaps listening to some of this might make some dent, but we have got aggravated burglaries in Victoria increasing by 146 per cent. That is pretty scary stuff: 146 per cent. The car thefts and the stabbings that are happening again and again – it scares me so much to hear how many people have knives and box cutters, with knife attacks and stabbings of so many innocent people. At the same time we are seeing people released so many – eight, nine, 10 – times and racking up charge after charge.

One of the other parts of these amendments means anyone aged 10 or 11 cannot be charged with a criminal offence – including aggravated burglary, stealing cars and murder – or be required to participate in programs aimed at addressing offending behaviours. Whilst there is no kid in custody under the age of 13, I have seen kids go through out-of-home care and end up in some really tragic situations, and I have had their parents talk to me about it. I know how disturbing and distressing it is,

and if there were some mechanism where they could participate in programs to address their behaviour, I think that would be particularly good.

The opposition put forward a number of amendments, some of which did not pass. One of them was to reverse Labor's weakening of the bail laws, which has seen violent offenders walk free, and in the most tragic of those circumstances innocent Victorians have lost their lives. This was blocked by Labor, and it worries me greatly that this can happen again and again.

One of the amendments that passed was about having the voices of victims heard by confirming that victim impact statements can be read in proceedings, and this is an important process for any victim of crime. The government had attempted to silence victims and not allow their impact statements to be read by someone if they did not want to attend a group conference themselves. We said this was not good enough, and the government did finally agree to an amendment to give victims this right. When you have a look at the number of clauses that are associated with that reading aloud of victim statements, there are quite a substantial number of significant changes that have been made, so I am pleased that the Shadow Minister for Youth Justice and Shadow Minister for Police, along with the Attorney-General, was able to work through quite a number of these. You can imagine that if you are a victim of crime you do want your voice to be heard. You want people to know what has happened to you, and that is part of the healing process. You have suffered some psychological trauma through this. Talking about it, knowing it has been read out and knowing it has been heard helps you on that journey to restoring your life. I think that the government had not really thought at all about victims, and I am glad that this was something that was able to be adopted.

One of the other points that I want to mention too that has been adopted is the expansion of the custodial right to positive development to include a requirement that an individualised program of meaningful and structured activities and support must be completed and agreed to within two weeks of the child or young person being received into a youth justice custodial sentence. I think that is also really important because, as I have mentioned, we have talked about the victims, but we have got to also offer these young offenders some hope and start to work with them if we want to move towards behavioural changes.

The government, again, has not been thinking about the impact on those who have been offended against and also those who are doing it, because sometimes these kids, particularly the younger people, have been hauled in and sucked in by some of the older people saying, 'Join in with us. We'll show you how it's done.' They may also feel quite threatened that if they do not join in, something might happen to them, and they might have the hard word put on them, 'Hey, it's your turn now. We've done this; we've broken in and knocked off that car. Now it's your turn. You go to this house. We know where it is. We want you to go, and we want you drive that car and to show us what you're made of.' This can be very scary and daunting for kids, but when they are feeling threatened themselves, they will go along and do it. Offenders will be at different stages of offending. When you have got the recidivist who has been released eight times compared to the person doing it for the first time, there is hope for that child, that young offender, the first time, much more so than down the track. I think we do need to offer these kids something to try and start in those early days to get them to rethink their behaviour and to do something that is more constructive.

I am pleased that the government has adopted some of the amendments that the opposition put forward. It is a long way short of what really needed to be done, and the community is less safe than it was in March.

**Jackson TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (15:17): It is great to rise and talk in support of this bill and the amendments in this place. From the very outset can I just place on record my thanks to the men and women in Victoria Police for their hard work each and every single day. Whilst important debate goes on in this chamber about important legislation which will strengthen the laws to keep our community safe, our frontline police officers are out there keeping Victorians safe. I am very proud that this government, the Allan Labor government, will always support police officers and will always provide

them with the tools and resources they need to get on with their job, to keep people safe and to go home safe at the end of every single shift.

I want to say as well that I commend in particular the member for Ashwood for his very controlled and sensible speech, going through the issues line by line, around the importance of taking this debate seriously, tackling it in a calm and measured manner and understanding the complexities of the issues which are being discussed and debated here. As we know, this bill makes sensible changes and amendments to the Bail Act 1977. Speaking about debate, it is my great belief that debate should reflect the issues, and it should not be an opportunity for political posturing, particularly when it comes to issues around community safety and these types of sensitive matters that are not just political opportunities; there are real people who are involved in these matters. So I want to ask members to keep that in mind in their contributions when it comes to this legislation and the amendments.

I will say as well that bail of course is a privilege, not a right. It is a privilege. Members opposite have been saying there is no consequence for breach of bail. That is simply not correct. The schedule 1 and schedule 2 offences are still in place; those have not changed. If you breach your bail, the police can revoke that bail. That has not changed. In fact that has been strengthened in this legislation. What has also been further strengthened in this legislation is the unacceptable risk test. The opposition talk about and go through the serious offending, which is of great concern to anybody in our community and to anybody in this place.

Those offences, which are detailed, predominantly when mentioned in this place are schedule 1 and schedule 2 offences. The bail tests around exceptional circumstances and compelling circumstances are the same. What will hopefully change is the next test. If you overcome those high bars of exceptional, compelling reasons, you then go on to the unacceptable risk test. I am very pleased that this government is taking decisive action that makes it very clear for bail decision-makers that they must assess the specific risk of a person committing serious offending if released on bail as well as community safety generally. That is a very, very sensible measure and one that I hope all members in this place can support.

It is a very sensible measure that will absolutely make a difference. I speak from experience, as a police prosecutor, of being in the Bail and Remand Court – in the BARC – at Melbourne Magistrates' Court as a frontline police officer and dealing with these issues. Also, dealing with these issues is again taking it back to being considerate, careful and measured in this debate and considering seriously the amendments before this house and the legislation that has been carefully worked through with Victoria Police, with the courts and with stakeholders to ensure that as a government and as a Parliament we can continue to strengthen community safety measures wherever possible. That is absolutely this government's commitment. That is what we have always done and what we will continue to do.

We also specifically call out the serious behaviour of dangerous driving and the serious crimes of aggravated burglary, armed robbery, carjacking and home invasion as explicit examples of offences that present as an unacceptable risk to community safety. That is very important because these are the offences which are of great concern to community. And yes, there are more offences in those schedules, but it is these offences we have seen in volume, and this is what needs to absolutely be dealt with. That is what this Parliament is doing, and that is what our government is doing. There will be prosecutors and magistrates who will look to this – if I were a betting person – and who will talk about Parliament's intention when it comes to these laws, and they will point to that.

The legislation will also clarify the ability of police to apply for bail revocation for breach of bail conditions. There are absolutely consequences. It will also introduce, appropriately, a new, separate offence for committing a serious crime, including aggravated burglary, carjacking, murder and rape, while on bail. We will also deliver an additional magistrate, which will be fast-tracked and in place this year, supporting the Children's Court's capacity to hear these cases quickly. We will match the efforts in the Children's Court by expanding Victoria Police's dedicated team of prosecutors, boosting the capability to respond to and prosecute this cohort of offenders.

I will not speak for much longer, but I will say again that these are reforms which are a direct result of serious, lengthy discussions with stakeholders like Victoria Police, like our courts, and of listening to community. I also want to take this opportunity to thank those in the other place for their work on this legislation and its passage long into the evening and this house for dealing with the amendments here in front of us today. This is very, very important legislation. It is important that this Parliament passes this legislation so we can continue to strengthen safety outcomes for our community.

**Jess WILSON** (Kew) (15:24): I too rise to speak on the Legislative Council's amendments to the Youth Justice Bill 2024. From the outset can I commend the great amount of work that the member for Berwick, the Shadow Minister for Police, did on behalf of the opposition, together with the Shadow Attorney-General the member for Malvern, in putting together the opposition's near I think 300 amendments that we took to the upper house a couple of weeks ago. We know the other place sat very late into the night and early into the next morning to pass a number of the amendments that the opposition put up. Unfortunately the bill that comes back before us today with the amendments that the government passed does nothing really to address the youth crime crisis in Victoria.

It does nothing to reverse the position that the Allan Labor government took earlier this year to weaken Victoria's bail laws. At a time when we have seen youth crime spike by 20 per cent – we have seen criminal incidents in Victoria increase by more than 10 per cent, but that youth crime figure is 20 per cent – we have seen this government decide to weaken Victoria's bail laws. We have heard from the government over the past week. We saw in the upper house, to the government's own bill, which has been in the making for many years, at the last moment a raft of amendments from the government because of the pressure from the Victorian community that the rise in youth crime is simply unacceptable. Victorians are afraid to be in their homes. Shop owners are concerned about the level of retail theft and retail theft that is violent. In my own electorate of Kew, and I have spoken about this previously, just in the last week of Parliament we asked the Premier directly about the impact on shop owners and shop attendants when they are in their stores and young offenders come in with machetes or with axes and threaten them and hold them at knifepoint. We know that these offenders have been out on bail, and they repeat-offend and repeat-offend. It is very, very clear that the system is simply not working for Victorians and not working to keep Victorians safe.

I think everyone in this house would agree that one of the most important roles of responsible government is to keep its citizens safe. That is one of the most important priorities that a government can have. Unfortunately we are seeing a bill come back before us today that does not improve safety or help reduce the youth crime rate in Victoria. Despite the amendments that go to bail in particular, the changes to bail that the government has brought forward only go to schedule 1 and schedule 2 offences while on bail. Previously it applied to all indictable offences. The member for Malvern this morning gave a very simple example: if a service station is the victim of an armed robbery, these changes will apply, but should an arson attack happen at that service station, these changes will not apply. The opposition have been very, very clear from the outset, from the moment these changes came before the Parliament, that we did not support them. We moved amendments to make sure that committing an indictable offence whilst on bail remained an offence in this state, yet we saw the government weaken those bail laws, and it is Victorians that continue to pay the price.

In my own electorate of Kew we have seen an increase in crime of around 6.9 per cent year on year, with a 17 per cent increase in aggravated residential burglary. I have constituents reach out to me regularly to express their concerns and their fears when it comes to the crime crisis in this state. Let me just refer to a number of these. I received an email from a local constituent who said:

... another attempted aggravated burglary at 4.29 am this morning – our 3rd attempt in 12 months. The police were amazing through 000 however it was another extremely scary expo again hearing someone try and open your doors (front and back) in the middle of the night. I know we weren't the only home that was attempted on the street at this time.



Another constituent reached out to share their own horrifying story:

Last Saturday morning (3:50 am), two people attempted to break into our house at ... Balwyn North and whilst the police caught one of them the other got away. This incident has really shaken us up (particularly given the one that got caught was armed). In fact my wife refuses to stay home alone! I've since found out this incident isn't a once off but a nightly occurrence right across Boroondara!!!

These are just two examples of many, many emails and the many people I speak to across the electorate who come and raise their concerns, particularly about the rise in aggravated burglary and not feeling safe in their homes.

I have a number of local constituents who come and raise the fact that their children simply are not prepared – teenage children and children entering their 20s – to be home alone anymore because of the fear of someone coming and trying to break into their home overnight. Unfortunately, what we see from these young offenders is repeat offenders. Time and time again they are out on bail, night on night. We hear it from the police. And we must give credit to the police, who are doing everything they can with the limited resources that they do have. We have 1000 vacancies when it comes to police on the beat in Victoria. We have had 43 police stations having to reduce their hours and not be open overnight because this government has failed to properly resource our police force here in Victoria. So we are looking at an issue where our local police are doing everything that they can do but they have got their hands tied behind their backs. They catch these offenders, they turn up at these incidents and they come in as quickly as they can to support these families, yet by the next morning these youth offenders are most likely back out on bail.

I pay credit to our own local Boroondara police station and the inspector there, Sandy McIver. We actually had a community forum last week led by Boroondara police about many of these issues, and it was very, very clear in that room that people have simply had enough, that they feel like this government is letting them down time and time again when it comes to the youth crime crisis in this state.

Just recently – over a month or so ago – we had an armed attack at one of the Shell service stations in the electorate, where youth offenders came in wielding machetes and held at knifepoint the young attendant who was on duty at the time. This was in the early hours of the morning on a busy road, and these young offenders came in with machetes and held him at knifepoint. I turn to an operations manager for a group of IGAs and FoodWorks, who said:

Our bail laws and courts are weak ... The assailants are getting younger, all while the government is trying to raise the age for charging people.

The government and courts have little care for the victims.

What is very clear and what is clear throughout the process of the Youth Justice Bill coming before the Parliament is that the pendulum has swung too far towards supporting the perpetrator rather than supporting the victims. We certainly saw that in the Youth Justice Bill, which actually looked to take away the voice of victims of youth crime when it comes to having a say on parole matters. Luckily the member for Berwick and the Shadow Attorney-General, the member for Malvern, put forward an opposition amendment to address this issue and the government eventually was dragged to the table and supported it. But this was taking away the voice of victims when it comes to the impact of youth crime on them and their families.

Youth crime is of incredible concern in this state. We hear day in, day out about the incidents right across Victoria. Just this morning we heard about the car accident by youth offenders in Hawthorn. My own godchildren were on their way to school and walking past at the time. It is a very busy intersection. We are just so lucky that no-one was hurt. But this is the consequence of mismanaging our youth justice system and not putting in place appropriate bail laws in this state to prevent it from continuing.

**Josh BULL** (Sunbury) (15:34): I am pleased this afternoon to have the opportunity to contribute to debate on the amendments that have been returned to this house from the Legislative Council. I do from the outset want to acknowledge the work that has been done by the LC, specifically the Attorney-General and of course others – a significant body of work, a very late night of sitting and a position that I believe has seen this bill land in a practical place, a place that this government always aims to arrive at, through strong, sound and sustained consultation with a whole range of those who have had frontline experiences with these matters.

I listened to the member for Bayswater and his fine contribution. I know that he spoke quite at length about the member for Ashwood's contribution, but to hear the member for Bayswater speak of many of the practical experiences that he had in his work before coming to this place I think is something that was of benefit to all members. Ensuring that we listen to those with frontline experience – those who each and every day serve our state and the people in it – I think is something that should always be at the forefront of what we do in the business of government and indeed of the house.

My contribution will be only very short. However, we do see, sadly – and we are not quite sure where they are going to land – those opposite on these and many matters unfortunately driven by ideology and driven by fear. It is a reflection, in many instances, of perhaps what is going on more in their own show than what is before us, in a practical, reasonable sense, to be able to deal with these matters in an appropriate way. This team is focused on making sure that we are supporting all Victorians. We are supporting young people right across our state, and I can see a number of young people in the gallery. Making sure that we are providing opportunities to support and making sure that we are investing in all of those services to enable young people to be their best and to have those opportunities before them is something that this government is indeed focused on.

In saying that, the amendments before us I believe and other members of the government believe strike that important balance in making sure that we are, as I said earlier, listening to the experts and listening to Victoria Police. Often I think that sometimes those opposite may just listen to themselves a little too much and not move about the community to understand the practical, balanced and reasonable nature of the amendments that have come before us. I think that is an important matter. I also want to acknowledge the work that has been done in the other place, as I mentioned earlier, the work of the Attorney-General, the work of the Minister for Police and the work of Mr Erdogan in the other place. I commend the amendments to the house.

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (15:37): I also rise to address the Legislative Council's amendments to the Youth Justice Bill 2024. I was listening to the member for Sunbury and the unfair accusation he was directing towards me and my colleagues that we are not listening to the community when it comes to Victoria's youth crime crisis. Can I assure the member for Sunbury, can I assure every member of this house and can I assure those students gathered in the gallery that indeed the opposition is doing its job. We are listening to Victorians when it comes to the youth crime crisis. We are hearing from our local residents about the impact that Labor's weakening of the bail laws is having on our communities. That is our job, we are doing our job, and we contend – Acting Speaker, through you, respectfully, to those members on the government side – that they are not doing theirs. If members of the government were listening to the community, then they would be doing a hell of a lot more than they are currently doing to try and keep people in our community safe.

What could be more important than keeping our community safe? What could be more important than someone leaving their home and feeling safe within their community, feeling safe in their home and feeling safe in their workplace? This is an absolute fundamental of what it is to live in Victoria. Yet, under this government, over the last 10 years the aggravated burglary rate itself has increased by 146 per cent. Since 2014 – after 10 years of Labor, after 10 Labor budgets, where we have got economic madness all over the place – frankly, the focus on keeping our community safe has been absolutely and utterly lacking, and now Victorians are paying the price.

We are here discussing the Council amendments, and here they are. I am flicking through them. I am thumbing through pages 1, 2, 3, 4 – there are 10 pages of Council amendments. Not one of these amendments actually reverses the bail laws that were weakened on 25 March by this government in this place. Not one of those amendments strengthens the bail laws to a point where they could be effective again. This is a point that we on this side of the house have made time and time again, and we will continue to do so.

Victorians are feeling unsafe at the minute. It is not fair on them, especially those vulnerable members of our community. Speaking of community members that are vulnerable, like the member for Kew, I also draw upon some examples within my own community. There was a gentleman, Spiros Filidis, who was brutally murdered in my electorate earlier this year, and our community was, frankly, rocked and shocked by this incident. I received a distressing letter from a constituent, Louise Khanbashi, who wrote to me earlier in the year:

The accused murderer of Spiros Filidis has a criminal history dating back 14 yrs with periods of incarceration and sentencing comments from 2020 stating that the community needs to be protected from his violent and antisocial behaviour ... Our justice system must do better when it is known that someone is a violent threat ...

We cannot keep enabling dangerous people to commit crimes:

... on our streets, unprovoked in broad daylight. Please help us make the streets safer. Please help fix this broken system. I don't even know where to go, but as a mother of 5, I am terrified for myself and my kids.

The member for Sunbury has asserted that we on this side of the house are not listening to our community. I again assure the member for Sunbury and assure members of the government that we indeed are listening to members of our community, and that is why we will not step back when it comes to this. We are determined to keep our communities safe. By their actions over the last 10 years it is quite clear that the Andrews, now Allan, Labor government is determined not to do this.

I also received correspondence from Graham Hill, who said to me:

Everyone in Bayside has either experienced invasion/theft or knows someone who has been affected.

In his letter, Graham referred to Victoria's weak bail laws as the root cause of the rise of violent crime across our state:

... re-offending whilst on bail is simply not good enough.

They are not my words but a local resident's words. He continued, saying that the people of his community and Victorian residents right around this state have a right to feel safe in their home, in their community and, most certainly, in their workplace. No matter what this Labor government does, no matter what amendments they bring back into the Assembly today to their own bill, the bail laws that they weakened on 25 March this year remain weak.

Of course in times like this, what do people who do not want to accept that a circumstance is a fact – as shocking as it is – do? They seek to blame others. The Minister for Police has said:

It is incumbent on the courts to make sure that repeat serious offenders who are on bail have that bail revoked. That is the expectation of the government, the parliament and the people of Victoria.

But here is the deal: as members of this place, as lawmakers in this state, we as members of Parliament should recognise that members of the judiciary can only actually enact laws that we create. They cannot delve into a magic hat of mystical rabbits and unicorns and create laws – no, no, no. They do not have that available to them. That is not the way the system works. The way the system works is we, representing the people of Victoria as the Parliament of Victoria, create laws, and it is judges that use those laws and are guided by those laws to cast judgement upon those who have done wrong within our community. Quite frankly, if government members cannot figure that out, well, fair dinkum, get another job.

I am deeply concerned and remain deeply concerned by this government's lack of interest in this particular matter. They say they are keeping our communities safe, and they are not. Member after member after member of this government will say they are keeping our community safe, but all the evidence is clear that they are not. Victoria Police do a sensational job; they really, really do. In a circumstance when Victoria Police numbers are down, when the officers – the men and women of the force – are doing everything they can to uphold the right and to keep our community safe, they are doing a darn good job. We thank them, and I hope that that would be a sentiment agreed to not just on this side of the chamber but also on the government side. We thank them for their service. We thank them for putting themselves on the line, for sacrificing themselves and for doing everything they can to keep our community safe. What they do desperately need is a government that backs them in, a government that helps them keep our community safe, and quite frankly the Allan Labor government, and the Andrews Labor government before them, have gone wanting when it comes to that.

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (15:45): I am pleased to speak to the amendments specifically, and I should say the bill makes amendments to the Bail Act 1977 which are further to those reforms passed in the Parliament last year. I will needle through some of those elements – the thread to the amendments and the purpose behind them. But fundamentally, what is the purpose for the changes? The Attorney-General's amendments to the Youth Justice Bill 2024 enhance our bail system by making clear that serious offences such as aggravated burglary, home invasion, sexual offending and armed robbery must be recognised for what they are: crimes that cause harm to community. I am not sure where those opposite's deliberate obscuration is on these very serious offences, because we are certainly extremely committed on this side. I commend my colleagues who were up until the late hours doing the hard yards to get this very important community safety legislation through.

What I would like to do is go through what the amendments are in terms of providing perhaps some more clarity, because it does seem that there has been a bit of smearing and blurring of the line, which I do not think is actually helpful to the broader community, particularly when we think of our police officers who day in, day out keep us safe and do the hard yards. I do not know how they do that job, to be frank. I think it takes a particular disposition to handle the very confronting sorts of behaviours et cetera that they deal with, and I will express my gratitude for the hard work that they do.

These amendments make it clear that bail decision-makers must assess the specific risk of a person committing serious offending if released on bail, as well as community safety generally; specifically call out the serious behaviours of dangerous driving and the serious crimes of aggravated burglary, armed robbery, carjacking and home invasion as explicit examples of offences that present an unacceptable risk to community safety; and clarify the ability of police to apply for bail revocation for breach of bail conditions.

I found it galling earlier when there was a suggestion that nothing here will do anything. I was thinking, 'What? Have you actually read the amendments?' Because, as I have just said, they clarify the ability of police to apply for bail revocation. Revocation means that you take away that right to bail. It is gone. If you cannot see the difference that would make, then I am a little bit confused, to be honest, because I think that is pretty clear. We are also making sure it is clear for the decision-makers who bear the burden of what would be difficult decisions. The amendments also introduce a new separate offence for committing a serious crime, including aggravated burglary, carjacking, murder and rape, while on bail. These changes are targeted at serious alleged offending on bail, consistent with the reforms that commenced in March this year.

I would like to point out, because again the line has been blurred here, the engagement of our government with the police, those on the front line. I just want to make it absolutely clear these are reforms that came directly from the government's conversations with Victoria Police and the courts, who are at the forefront of bail decision-making and who we need to support to have absolute clarity when making their decisions. I hope that that is apparent and evident for the benefit of the chamber and for anyone who happens to be watching this debate here today. Make no mistake, of course we are engaging with those who are on the front line, for very good reason – because we want to make

sure that the reforms will have the effect that we are seeking to deliver for community when it comes to supporting community safety. These amendments are about clarifying the tests that currently exist and the standards that should currently be applied. Our focus is on ensuring that there are serious consequences for serious offending – high-harm, high-impact offending. In this way, the amendments also ensure the changes do not have an overpunitive impact on people accused of lower level offending.

On that point, I do just want to go to a further issue. There has been a continuous sort of narrative and theme here, which I believe is missing the mark on that very important nuance and underpinning rationale of these very important reforms. The bail reforms that were passed last year had nothing to do with weakening bail or making it easier for serious offenders to get bail. What the reforms did was ensure our bail system could distinguish between low-level, nonviolent offending and serious high-harm, high-impact offending that posed a risk to community safety. We know the difference. It is certainly a very important one, because fundamentally what we are driving here with these reforms is of course supporting community safety but not creating perverse outcomes that deliver even greater injustices than what we started with in the first place. I think it is very important that that nuance of the high-harm, high-level offending versus low-level, nonviolent offending is well understood and not blurred or obscured simply to make political points or to frighten the community in a way that does not actually enhance community safety.

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (15:52): It is my pleasure to get to speak about the amendments to the Youth Justice Bill 2024 today and speak specifically to the amendments that I am about to pick apart – amendments 61 to 67 – and clause 913. Let us have a look at the cold, hard facts. What is the result of the Allan Labor government being so soft on crime and weakening the bail laws for criminals in this state? In the past year in homes there has been an 18.4 per cent increase in residential aggravated burglaries, which is now up to a 146 per cent increase since the Labor government came to power in 2014. Across the past 10 years there has been a 146 per cent increase in residential aggravated burglaries – let that one sink in. That is absolutely unacceptable. We ought to lock away our cars, because in the past year there has been a 22.7 per cent increase in motor vehicle theft. If you are a retailer, there has been a 34.5 per cent increase in theft from retail stores in the past year. What about youth crime, as we speak to the Youth Justice Bill amendments today? There has been a more than 20 per cent increase in criminal incidents committed by youth offenders aged 10 to 17.

In my electorate of Warrandyte there has been a 49 per cent increase in breaking and entering compared to last year. In real terms for our community, when we look at that from suburb to suburb, in Doncaster East alone that has gone up by 73 per cent in the last year – this is aggravated burglaries. Crimes in the suburbs of Warrandyte and Park Orchards are up 71 per cent and 57 per cent respectively. These are not just numbers, these are real people being impacted, being victims of crime because of this government being weak on bail.

Just recently I held a crime prevention and community safety forum in my electorate specifically for the suburbs of Doncaster East and Donvale, who have suffered as a consequence of a 73 per cent increase in aggravated burglaries. We heard from community member after community member. We had a packed-out forum, where we got to hear from so many locals who were impacted adversely by crime. We heard really chilling stories of a local mum whose 14-year-old was home alone when a group of armed invaders broke into their home. Can you imagine that? Your 14-year-old daughter is home alone when armed invaders break into the home, and not only that, when she goes upstairs to barricade herself in her bedroom to keep herself safe they try to break into that door. Thankfully she is safe, but they were made to feel no safer by the fact that they were broken into again within that very same month. That is how bad crime is in my electorate.

The amendments that we proposed are in response to the fact that there is a crime crisis across our state and the government bill fails to address it. They failed when they made bail laws weaker earlier this year in March. They failed when they cut funding for crime prevention programs in the budget

this year in May. They failed when they proposed this weak bill a few weeks ago, and they are failing and continuing to fail the Victorian people here today.

In fact Victorian criminals would be forgiven for thinking that they are in a groundhog day. Why? Because under this government when they commit a crime they get to be let out to do it again. They wake up the next day, they commit a crime and get bailed. They get out the next day, commit another crime and get bailed. Eight to nine times over, as we have heard from other members on this side of the house, they get bailed again and again and again and again and again and again and again and again. Eight to nine times over violent criminal offenders in our community rinse and repeat. That is how weak our bail laws are here in Victoria. Friends of mine that work in the youth justice space tell me that young offenders boast about the fact that they will just keep reoffending, they will just keep getting out and they do not care because they will never get into trouble anyway. There are kids that are committing these crimes that are boasting about the fact that they commit them and they get away with it. For the criminals, it is the same cycle over and over again because the Allan Labor government weakened bail laws in March this year and they remain weaker today under this new bill.

Youth offenders in Victoria are more likely to get bail than in any other state in Australia. But who is it not the same for? It is the victims – the victims of car theft, the victims of aggravated burglaries, the victims of machete attacks, the victims of violent offences that have been shared all through this side of the house as we have contributed to this debate. People like Dr Ash Gordon in Doncaster and his family, as the member for Morwell has spoken about so many times in this place, who will never be the same again after their son, their brother and their friend was murdered by an alleged offender, 16 years of age, who was arrested and bailed only weeks before for a machete attack. For these victims, their days are not the same. It is groundhog day for criminals, who keep getting bail. It is groundhog day for Victorians, who feel unsafe in their own homes and who live in fear because of this crime crisis we face in our state.

The soft-on-crime and quick-to-bail approach of the Allan Labor government has made criminals more brazen than ever. What used to be done in the dead of night or in the darkness of the evening or in back alleyways now happens openly in the middle of the day. The *Herald Sun* reported last week that students at Victoria University are wearing personal alarms around their neck when walking around during the middle of the day for fear of being attacked. Last month, just next door to my electorate, there were three boys at Eastland shopping centre in Ringwood after school who were attacked by a group of nearly 15 teens demanding that they hand over vapes, money and even the clothes on their back in the middle of a store in the busy shopping centre at 4 pm in the afternoon. Seeing the attackers coming, they thought they would be safe inside the store, where security cameras and staff were present. Under previous laws maybe that would have been true, but it is no longer the case. One of the boys was savagely grabbed and punched by the gang before breaking away. Why is it that criminals have become so bold? It is because they know that this government is soft on crime, quick to bail and that even if they do get caught they will get bailed and get right back to it the very next day.

The truth is the Victorian government has failed to provide community police officers with the funding and the resources that they need to tackle crime. In the most recent state budget almost \$20 million was cut from crime prevention, community-based offender supervision and youth diversion programs, as Labor's net debt is set to reach \$187.8 billion by 2027–28. This is a cut at a time when the funding is needed the most. We are talking about a budget where we are cutting funding to crime prevention, as I say, community-based offender supervision and youth diversion programs in the middle of a youth crime crisis, all while there are 800 Victoria Police vacancies and while police stations have been closed. At the end of last year 43 police stations across our state had their opening hours slashed and were forced to close at night because of staffing struggles. Our police are underfunded, they are understaffed, and we have vacancies through the roof. People usually join the police because they want to help put criminals behind bars, to get offenders off the street. Maybe it is that people do not want to join the police force because they know that in this state the criminals they catch will probably

just be let out the very next day because of the weakened bail laws. How disheartening, how disappointing and how very unfair for our courageous and commendable policemen and policewomen who give up so much to serve our community.

In the minute I have left can I just make this point: there was an opportunity for the government to work with the coalition when we introduced at the end of last year a private members bill – the member for Berwick brought it to this place – to prohibit the use of machetes. Machetes are an antiquated weapon. No-one uses them anymore except for violent criminals. You do not use them in farming, you do not use them as a tool and you do not use them in agriculture. It is an antiquated weapon, and in order to protect our community and keep them safe we tried to pass a bill to make sure that our community felt safe, but unfortunately –

**Daniela De Martino:** On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance, there is no mention of machetes in this bill. It is irrelevant to this.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. It has been a wideranging debate on the amendments.

**Nicole WERNER:** I will just close by saying that this is simply not good enough. Victorians deserve better than this.

**Steve DIMOPOULOS** (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (16:02): I move:

That the question be now put.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Under standing order 155(2)(b), the Chair must put the question immediately without amendment or debate unless he or she believes that it is a denial of the rights of the minority. As I look through the speaking list, I notice there are members from the Nationals and the Greens in the house who have not spoken, so I will not put the question, but I would encourage those members from the minority to take their chance.

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (16:03): I rise to speak on the Youth Justice Bill 2024 and the amendments that have come down from the Legislative Council for us to debate. There are 10 pages of amendments here. These are the government's own amendments because they recognised, after the hard work of my colleagues, that the 300 amendments that we put to the house when this bill was introduced needed to be considered. We still believe – it is not a belief, it is a fact – that this bill is not going to address the youth crime issue that we are seeing in Victoria because even with the passing of these amendments we will still have weaker bail laws than we had in this state in March of this year.

It is disappointing to stand to speak on this Youth Justice Bill, with my colleagues having put so much work into this, and still find ourselves, as the state of Victoria, with weakened laws that allow crime rates to continue to escalate. The message we are sending to criminals in this state – particularly youth, to whom I believe we have a very strong responsibility to guide on a pathway of improvement, not recidivism – is we are absolutely failing them. By weakening the bail laws and making it possible for people under 18 years of age to be given bail on any number of occasions, despite having committed crimes while they are on bail, is sending a message that no matter what you do you will just get off every single time.

I do not understand how anyone could think – unless you put boundaries and consequences in place for a young person, and I think most parents find this, they will not learn responsibility and how to work and be in a family and be in a society in a cohesive manner. That is what you try to instil in a child from the time they learn how to communicate and share as a two-year-old. Then we get to youth crime and we say, 'It doesn't matter what you do. You can hurt someone, you can steal from someone, you can carjack, you can take a car and drive it irresponsibly without a licence at high speed and put people at risk, and you will get off.' This is why we are seeing Victoria go backwards. This is why we

are seeing our crime rates escalate. It is evidenced by our crime rates. If you look at the aggravated burglary statistics over the last 10 years, since the Allan Labor government have been in power, you will see a 146 per cent increase in those figures since 2014. We are seeing car theft up by 22 per cent. We have a crime crisis in Victoria, and these very weak laws that the Allan Labor government are putting through are enabling the crime rates. They are enabling people instead of sending the right message.

It has been happening for centuries, that people get punished for doing something wrong. We do not have to actually imprison people. We understand that it is important to have youth diversion programs and reform, and that is where the government's energy should have been placed. But instead of placing it in those areas, guiding someone who has done something wrong through a reform program and making it mandatory for them to attend so they actually understand the consequences of their actions, this government in the last budget cut \$20 million from youth diversion programs. That is the message Victorians are seeing from the Allan Labor government, that it is absolutely okay to engage in crime. That is why we are seeing youth gangs who are growing in number and more and more out of control. It is because they are allowed to get away with it. You would have to be blind Freddy not to hear what is going on in Victoria, because every day you turn on the radio and there is more crime being reported, from shops being burnt to burglaries, carjackings and knife crime – it is actually very frightening. Even in South-West Coast, where we have had a long history of fairly low crime rates, the changes that I am seeing in the towns of Warrnambool and Portland are quite frightening.

Last week I met with the police, and can I remind the community what a great job police do. My brother has been a policeman since he was about 21, so I have a close affinity with family members who are actually in the police force. I have always admired the commitment, the bravery and the courage that they exhibit and their commitment, as I said, to Victoria and keeping the people safe. But they do not feel backed in now. They do not feel that they are getting the support from the government, and when you see legislation like this you can understand why. I met with the police in Warrnambool last week and I was really impressed with their level of commitment and what they are doing to ensure that people in the Warrnambool community are feeling safe. They are making sure they are meeting with the people. There was a forum held recently which was very, very well attended because people are getting very nervous. They are seeing the change in their own community. I am hearing from shop owners in the main streets of the larger towns that they are feeling unsafe and they are seeing much more abusive behaviour from people in the street. I am hearing from young people. One girl said to me, 'I've travelled the world on my own, but the people that are gathering outside a particular venue where alcohol is sold are frightening me and I've never felt so confronted.' These are stories that we do not want to be hearing. We want to be giving the police the tools so they actually can manage community safety in the way that they have done for a very long time.

But something has drastically changed in the last 10 years, and here is the evidence of what that change is: we have got laws that are being weakened, and that is why we are seeing quotes from people like the manager of an IGA, Lincoln Wymer, who said:

Our bail laws and courts are weak ... the government is trying to raise the age for charging people.

The government and courts have little care for the victims.

We saw that in the bill with an amendment that we proposed initially. The government was actually trying to silence victims. They do not want the victims to be taken into consideration. We opposed that, and now they have actually improved the situation for victims somewhat. But you see the culture of this government trying to silence victims, decreasing bail laws and making them weaker, not putting boundaries in place and not having consequences for young people. They do not have a mandatory diversion program available so that they can take a different path that will not send them down a life of crime and more than likely a negative lifestyle into the future and one which will probably end up having prison as a part of it, which no-one wants to see for young people. With crime rates escalating, what we have is a crime crisis in Victoria and a government too weak and too inadequate to help back our police in.



I will finish here by saying the community are desperate for change. They want to see the police having the rules and the resources they need and the laws they need to keep their community safe. Living in fear is not how Victoria should be, but that is how many Victorians are feeling. When we are seeing, up in the country even more, the fear of a community without the resources required to keep them safe, I think the government has failed Victoria and needs to think about how it can strengthen police resources to keep Victorians safe.

**Daniela DE MARTINO** (Monbulk) (16:12): It gives me pleasure to rise to speak on this bill, which has been returned from the Legislative Council with amendments. I would like to clarify something. I have heard now several – in fact all – members of the opposition speak about this bill silencing the voices of victims. I would like to introduce some facts into the chamber when it comes to this. It is important to note that this bill establishes for the first time ever a youth justice victims register, which is akin to the one that exists in the adult system. Once this bill is passed, it will be the first time that this has applied in the youth justice system. That is incredibly important. The claim of silencing victims is false – categorically false. No government – and I actually speak from personal experience, having gone through the court system – has done more for victims than this government, and I know that because I have had personal experience through the criminal justice system as a witness myself and as someone very close to a child witness, who was given so much support through initiatives introduced by this government which are beyond commendable. They made all the difference. There is a lot that has been said in here, but once again I would like to introduce some facts to the matter. I will keep my contribution incredibly short, but I felt compelled to stand in this place and speak about this. I commend the bill to the house.

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (16:14): In speaking to these amendments to the Youth Justice Bill 2024 I would like to start by saying that the Greens have long argued for a better approach to youth justice, and the bill that has come back today and is before us goes a long way to achieving that. It has been some years in development, and the positive measures in this bill are the result of powerful and committed advocacy by First Nations, legal and human rights groups. The Greens acknowledge the years of work by those stakeholder groups, and in supporting the bill we are proud to back their efforts. We know children do not belong in prison, and a fair society would do everything it could to keep our children safe in school, in the community and away from the harm of prison and the wider criminal justice system.

One of several positive measures in this bill is that it raises the age of criminal responsibility to 12 without exception, but before I talk about the rest of the bill, I want to address the Premier's announcement made a fortnight ago reneging on raising the age to 14. We know that dragging children through our penal system traumatises them and puts them on a path that makes them more likely to reoffend, and we know that First Nations children and children of colour will be disproportionately impacted due to factors like systemic racism in our criminal justice system. Aboriginal children are more than 10 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous children. Aboriginal communities and medical, legal and human rights experts have been calling for all states in Australia to raise the minimum age so that children do not go to prison unless they are at least 14 years old, in line with international human rights standards.

Promises were made to the Aboriginal community, to stakeholders and to the Yoorrook Justice Commission that the age of criminal responsibility would be raised to 14 by 2027, which would have made Victoria one of the first states to legislate this change. But then Labor shamefully abandoned this promise. The argument that because there are none in jail today in that age group is as relevant as it was when we abolished capital punishment and people argued that was not necessary, because we had not hung anyone for about seven years. This goes against all the evidence, reneging on this promise. One of the amendments that the Greens moved in the other place was to increase the age to 14 without exception. Unfortunately Labor and the Liberals teamed up to vote this down. But they are on the wrong side of history, and the Greens will continue to stand with First Nations communities and the experts and will keep pushing for this reform.

I will return now to some of the other many positive elements of the bill. Among others there is now a presumption that 12- to 13-year-olds do not have the capacity to differentiate between right and wrong. Known as *doli incapax*, it is now enshrined in legislation. Solitary confinement in youth detention is banned, and that is something that the Greens have campaigned for repeatedly. There are improved provisions around sentencing, diversions and improved definitions of the ‘use of force’ and the ‘use of search powers’. Importantly there are guiding youth justice principles which set the tone for all who work with children and young people. This includes a section which is specific to Aboriginal children and young people.

The Greens felt that the bill could be improved, so we negotiated a number of successful amendments in the bill. They include, one, a specific ban on spit hoods in legislation. We do not believe that regulations were enough for this issue, and it needed to be elevated to legislation. Two, in the principal section of the bill the hierarchy of ‘least restrictive’ police intervention is noted, raising its prominence. Three, there is an exercise recreation target of 2 hours. At the moment there is a mandatory minimum of 1 hour of exercise for young people in detention. Following expert health guidelines, we argued that this should be a minimum of 3 hours but have negotiated a compromise with the government that there is a legislated target of 2 hours. Four, public reporting on numbers of strip searches in youth justice centres – currently there is no reporting on strip searches on children and young people, and there will now be annual reporting on how many of these searches occur. The department has advised that as they bring in scanning equipment to all youth justice facilities the need for manual strip searches will decline, so we hope to see that represented in the public reporting. And, five, there will be public reporting of isolation incidents, and that will now be broken down by time periods. Currently the only public reporting is how many isolation episodes there are per quarter and for what reason. This Greens amendment will mean that we can see how long a child or young person is in isolation for. The use of isolation on young people is very contentious. One of the unsuccessful amendments the Greens moved was to ban the use of isolation for reasons unrelated to the behaviour of the child or young person.

We have heard from too many stakeholders and stories from young people themselves that concern us, and there were a number of items in this bill which we voted against. We voted against the clauses that allow a trial of electronic monitoring. The government argument is that electronic monitoring will ensure bail conditions are being met, and that claim certainly appeases certain community concerns. But ankle monitors do not prevent people from breaching bail; they simply track them if they do so. Electronic monitoring in the youth justice context has been tried a number of times across jurisdictions, and there is limited evidence that it works and good evidence to show that it does not work. An independent report of the 2021 Queensland trial found electronic ankle bracelets did not prevent young people from reoffending. In fact the evidence suggested that strict monitoring could actually make recidivism worse, with the lead report author saying that:

Increasing the level of monitoring and surveillance over these children might actually entrap them within the system we are wanting them to exit.

In the US electronic monitoring has become a huge private industry and profit-making venture, so the Greens will be seeking assurances from the government that this trial will not be outsourced.

We voted against powers allowing the transfer of 16- and 17-year-olds to adult prisons. Young people do not belong in prison. They certainly do not belong in adult prisons, and we believe it is unconscionable to do that. Again we make the point that if the state wants to imprison children and young people, it needs to invest in the system to make it safe for them to be there.

We did not support the government amendment to reintroduce bail offences. The government moved a house amendment to its own bill to reintroduce a bail offence. The Greens did not support this. It is timely that we remind ourselves of the tragic death of Veronica Nelson and the strong advocacy by her family and community to develop Poccum’s law’ – a blueprint to keep vulnerable people out of prison. Removing bail offences was a key element in Poccum’s law. To Veronica’s family, friends and the community, please know that Veronica is never far from our thoughts.

Lastly, with a number of new powers granted to police, it is time to speak, yet again, about the urgent need for an independent police ombudsman in Victoria. Stakeholders have been very clear that the fingerprints of Victoria Police can be seen throughout this Youth Justice Bill, including new powers that will allow for children aged 10 and 11 to be transported in a police vehicle and locked up in a police station when the age is raised to just 12. We agree with a recent opinion piece that we see:

... the Allan government presenting its political priorities to us in no uncertain terms – it is more interested in protecting police and their interests than protecting children.

Premier, it is time for an independent police ombudsman.

**Meng Heang TAK** (Clarinda) (16:22): I am pleased to rise to join this side of the house to speak on these Youth Justice Bill 2024 amendments. Our focus on this is to ensure there are serious consequences for serious offending – high-harm, high-impact offending. This is why under our amendments those who commit a serious offence as outlined in schedule 1 and schedule 2 of the Bail Act 1977 will be able to be charged with a standalone offence. This does not capture the low-level, nonviolent offences proposed by those opposite to be included, which we know significantly contribute to the over-representation of nonviolent, vulnerable offenders in our judicial system. This is a very important amendment that is brought here today, and I wholeheartedly commend the bill to the house.

**Martin CAMERON** (Morwell) (16:23): I rise to speak on the amendments to the Youth Justice Bill 2024. It is unfortunate, but young people are committing serious crimes without consequence in our state. That is a fact. I know in my community of the Latrobe Valley there are a lot of aggravated burglaries, car thefts, fights on the street and concealed weapons – as in machetes – being carried by our youth. It is just a fact of life at the moment that these crimes do go on. The Latrobe Valley community has a worrying continuing spike not only in crime but youth crime, in particular violent crime. As I said, you think if you are in your own house, with your car keys on your kitchen table or the bench in the hallway, that you are safe, that no-one would be brazen enough. Sometimes it is without the owners even knowing that people have walked in and grabbed the keys and moved out. But sometimes if you are standing in that hallway, an altercation can occur with people of all ages. I am not just throwing the youth into this, but we are talking about the Youth Justice Bill amendments. The youth grab the keys, jump in the car and take off. As I said, they are breaking into houses. They are running through our shopping centres. I know it was only in the middle of the year that in broad daylight in Traralgon, in one of our main shopping centres, police apprehended young people wielding a machete as mothers and children looked on in horror. So it does go on. I know it is not just in my town of Traralgon, it is right through my community of the Latrobe Valley. And I am sure that members in this chamber have these particular incidents go on, as has been highlighted by many members that stand up here and run through a list of what has gone on.

Unfortunately, we do not hear the voices of the people who are the victims of crime. I have stood in this chamber many a time and spoken about Dr Ashley Gordon, whose life was tragically taken by an offender who was out on bail. He was out on bail a few times. Then unfortunately Dr Ash decided to set chase after these people that had broken into his house, which ended with Ash being killed on the street, which was a shocking thing to happen. I cannot comprehend how as a family you would get over that. In saying that, Ash was stabbed by some 16-year-olds, so they are a little bit older. Dr Gordon's sister Natalie, who is a great advocate for changes to the bail laws and the youth justice system, decided to come and see me. The family wanted to start up a petition, which we are running at the moment, and the family, as Nat always says, are still struggling to this day with what happened back at the start of the year. It has affected her family. Her mother Catherine, who I stand with on street corners signing this petition, will not let this go. I will stand by them until we get the required changes that we do need to protect the families, to stop perpetrators being able to commit a crime and get bail and be back out on the street and unfortunately in the end commit a crime where it does take someone's life or causes an injury that will incapacitate them for the rest of their life. But for the family to have to go through birthdays and Christmases without their brother, a medical practitioner who

started his own clinic and was helping out the community down here in Melbourne – for him to now not be in their life is just a tragedy. The family and friends of Dr Ash – both down in the Latrobe Valley, where the family is, and down here in Melbourne – will carry this for the rest of their lives.

We as a Parliament must be supporting the voices of these families. We need to make sure that we also support these younger children that are on a pathway. We need to have these diversionary programs that we can put them in so they have choices. They can choose if they do not want to live a life of crime. We need to have these diversionary programs in place. There was one program, Morwell youth space, which luckily now, after many, many times I have stood in the chamber here, finally has some funding. They have got some surety from the government that they have three years of continued work. This is one of these diversionary programs with over 700 participants that are using the Morwell youth space, and it is where disadvantaged kids that are living on the streets and are participating in crime can come in and they can eat, they can have showers there, and they can also be put in contact with a lot of other places where they can actually get some help, which is fantastic.

As I said, I met with the family, and they gave some pretty blunt feedback on what needs to happen. It is our job in this place to make laws that, one, give police more powers to actually be able to make arrests and stop and search people if they think that they have got concealed weapons. If they are charged and go to court, we need to have laws in place where our judges and the people that are sitting in there have options when they sentence people and also options about bail. If you are going back five, six, seven or eight times and you are breaching your bail, something is wrong. And if you get bail once again and you are back out on the street, which happens a lot, what is happening there? We need to make sure that there are options open and that this cannot happen. We seem to fall into this trap: if a person or a child that goes to court and gets bail then adheres to that bail and does the right thing, that is fantastic, but when a person is going back to court nearly weekly to face the same judge and gets back out on bail once again, that is when we do have issues. We need to make changes to the rules for the people of the court and also for our police, who do an unbelievable job, to make sure that they have all the powers that they need to keep us safe on the streets. We have only got to look around the chamber at the moment to see young expectant mums. I would hate to think that an aggravated burglary could go on in their homes, not only in the city of Melbourne but also around regional Victoria, wherever they are, and that is something that is on the table and can happen now.

We need to make sure that we do not come back in here and say we got it wrong. We do have opportunities in this place to make rules and regulations that benefit the community. That is what we are here for: we are here to keep the people of Victoria safe – the people that do the right thing, the silent majority that toe the line and make sure they live their life to the letter of the law. We need to look after them. Sometimes we change laws for people that do the wrong thing – that noisy minority that make the noise and jump up and down. We change rules for them. Well, how about we start to look at the silent majority that actually do the right thing not only for the people of Victoria but also in trying to provide a safe environment for their families.

There are over 300 amendments that went through in the other place. It is a start, but we have weakened bail laws and also youth justice laws, so there is more to be done to keep the people of Victoria safe. It is a start, but we need more, and we need it now.

**Steve DIMOPOULOS** (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (16:33): I move:

That the question be now put.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister for Environment has moved that the question be now put. In accordance with standing order 155, I accept the question.

**Assembly divided on Steve Dimopoulos's motion:**

*Ayes (56):* 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, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Sam Hibbins, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Anthony Carbines's motion agreed to.**

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

### *Business of the house*

#### **Victorian Auditor-General's Office**

##### *Financial audit*

**The SPEAKER (16:39):** I have received a message from the Legislative Council informing the Legislative Assembly that they have agreed with the Assembly to appoint Andrew Wehrens of Nexia Melbourne Audit for a period of four years to conduct the financial audits of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office for the financial years 2024–25 to 2027–28.

### *Bills*

#### **Prahran Mechanics' Institute Repeal Bill 2024**

##### *Council's agreement*

**The SPEAKER (16:39):** I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Prahran Mechanics' Institute Repeal Bill 2024 without amendment.

### *Committees*

#### **Electoral Matters Committee**

##### *Reference*

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (16:40): I move:

That this house refers an inquiry into possible reforms to the composition of, and voting systems for, the Legislative Council to the Electoral Matters Committee for consideration and report no later than 8 December 2025.

I would first like to thank the Electoral Matters Committee and the committee staff for their hard work. In particular I would like to acknowledge the work of the chair and the deputy chair, the member for Kororoit and the member for Narracan. The report made a number of findings and recommendations, and the government will consider each of those in due course. Section 6 of the report makes a series of findings and recommendations regarding potential reforms to the upper house, one of which was recommendation 19, seeking a further inquiry into those possible reforms. The government is seeking

to acquit that recommendation today. I do not intend to go into the substance of the report, and there will of course be further time for that at a later date.

The last time that there was significant reform to the upper house it was led by Premier Bracks, the Bracks Labor government, back in 2003. The former Premier introduced the Constitution (Parliamentary Reform) Bill 2003, which following its passage came into effect from the 2006 state election onwards. The 2003 reforms established the eight regions, each electing five members. An interesting point to note is that at the 2002 state election the Greens party collected about 314,000 votes for the upper house, which is roughly what they achieved in the 2006 state election, the big difference being that under the 2003 reforms the Greens were able to secure three seats in the upper house. I might reflect on that, but I will not – others might. These are some of the same reforms that the Greens are now passionately opposed to, in my understanding.

Finding 17 from the report on the previous state election found that the proposed changes to the upper house voting system would make it more difficult for smaller parties to be represented in the upper house and made other recommendations for and against a number of other proposed changes. Given all of this, it is clear that we need to understand what the different models for the composition of the chamber could look like, how those members would be elected and what, if any, those impacts would be on representation in the house. It is now more than 20 years since we saw that first wave of significant reforms. Victoria has certainly changed a lot in that time – I might say for the better, given that during that time we have been led by Labor governments in this state – so for those reasons the government thinks it is important to refer this inquiry to identify what possible changes could look like and what their impact would be.

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (16:43): I would like to also thank the secretariat of the Electoral Matters Committee and also the committee members. We had some substantial changes to the committee over the duration of its formation. We had a change of chair, which of course made a little bit of a change to the focus of some of the elements of the committee. It also did create some challenges, I think, in terms of the flow and collection of understanding of what was required. In relation to the report, I do thank all members of the committee for their work. There was a lot of work put into ensuring that we had a comprehensive summary of all the evidence that was put before the committee and that we tried to hit the mark when it came to identifying some of the issues around the 2022 election. In my electorate we had significant issues when it came to the Stawell booths in particular running out of ballot papers and thereby removing the democratic opportunity for every single member of the Stawell community to cast a ballot.

That has an impact not just on my own vote of course but on all of the other candidates who put their hand up for election. It also created a very stressful scenario for the hardworking booth workers and booth managers over the last election. I understand through the evidence provided to the committee that similar issues were experienced in the electorate of Bass, which we know was a closer result, and I am sure that the member for Bass receives the same emails that I do to this day. I received an email this morning from a former resident of Stawell very, very concerned about the lack of appropriate distribution of ballot papers and therefore the Victorian Electoral Commission not delivering on one of its key requirements, which is to ensure that every Victorian has the opportunity to cast a ballot on election day and have their voice heard.

As the Leader of the House mentioned, this reference for a further inquiry for the Electoral Matters Committee to look at group voting tickets and particularly the upper house composition is actually summarised quite comprehensively within the report which has already been tabled. While we have looked at recommendation 19, I would refer the Leader of the House to recommendation 17. It is quite clear in recommendation 17 that there has been considerable evidence provided to the Electoral Matters Committee over what the future composition should look like in regard to the group voting

ticket, and there has been a lot of discussion and a lot of evidence heard around what the upper house composition should look like into the future. I refer to and I will directly quote recommendation 17:

That the Government reform the Upper House voting system by introducing legislation amending the Electoral Act to:

- eliminate group voting tickets
- allow voters to indicate multiple preferences for parties/groups above the line, where a preference above the line is interpreted as a preference for all of the candidates of that party/group, in the order listed on the ballot paper
- have ballot papers direct voters to select at least five preferences above the line
- include savings provisions similar to those in the Commonwealth Electoral Act that a vote is still valid if fewer than five preferences above the line are indicated.

The current system for voting below the line should be retained.

There is a very important reason for this, because what we have seen is that we have had upper house members who were representing particularly regional parts of the state where they certainly had not been elected by the majority of people living within that electorate. I think most egregious was the election of Andy Meddick of the Animal Justice Party to represent an area which is largely reliant on the livestock sector to drive its economy, yet with just 2.71 per cent of the total vote we had somebody who was representing this region whose main aim was to shut down the livestock industry. It was reprehensible to think that our voting system would reflect that as a fair and a just outcome, and I note the hard work of the Electoral Matters Committee of the previous Parliament, which had made similar recommendations about reformation of the group voting ticket – that it is not providing an outcome which is democratic and reflects the intent of the electorate.

This goes to an element which I think was covered quite comprehensively through the evidence that the Electoral Matters Committee heard, particularly from the Angry Victorians Party, where they submitted and shared some video evidence of some very underhanded discussions going on in relation to Glenn Druery, known as ‘the vote whisperer’. This must be addressed. It is absolutely incomprehensible that the government would not have intent to clean this up when we have had so much evidence brought before a parliamentary committee which showed at best corruption and at worst criminal behaviour, where parliamentary budgets are being used to pay somebody off in exchange for preferences, where people who think they are voting for the ‘sack Dan Andrews’ party actually get their preferences pushed through to the Australian Labor Party. That is absolute deception of the worst kind, and people do not know where their vote is ending up. We understand that there has not been an appetite from the Labor government to change this voting system, because it works in their favour to have an upper house where they have got dodgy deals that are happening behind the scenes which are not being corrected even though they are known and there is evidence.

**A member** interjected.

**Emma KEALY:** If anyone is going ‘What?’, I suggest that they read the fabulous report by the Electoral Matters Committee which covers this quite comprehensively. The evidence is on the table.

**Mary-Anne Thomas** interjected.

**Emma KEALY:** Excuse me? On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would like the Leader of the House to withdraw that comment.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage):** Leader of the House, did you direct a comment at a particular individual on the crossbenches?

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** I did not, but I withdraw.

**Emma KEALY:** Just on that point of order, Acting Speaker, it is the usual practice of the house that if somebody takes offence and asks them to withdraw, it is not whether somebody directed a

comment to somebody or not. If I am offended, my understanding is that the usual behaviour of the house is someone is automatically asked to withdraw.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage):** Member for Lowan, I am happy to seek the guidance of the Speaker or the clerks at a later time. My understanding at the moment, as an Acting Speaker, is that part of what I have seen over the last couple of sitting weeks was a determining factor. I thank you for your feedback, and I will discuss it with the Speaker.

**Emma KEALY:** The evidence was comprehensive that it is the Australian Labor Party that is benefiting from this group voting ticket system.

I would like to pick up on one of the recommendations in the minority report, which makes very clear what should be taking place in terms of further inquiries of this Parliament, and that is of course recommendation 3:

Establish a Parliamentary Inquiry into the dealings of Mr Glenn Druery and Members of the Legislative Council, with the Inquiry report tabled in both Houses of Parliament and with immediate referrals to the Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission ... of any adverse findings.

This is an extraordinarily serious matter. It is something that has come up through this inquiry; it is something that has come up through previous inquiries. We have had reports tabled before Parliament. It is something that must be investigated, and it must be halted. We cannot have this pushback for another inquiry through the Electoral Matters Committee when we have already heard significant evidence that would help to inform us on what voting system we should have in the future and how we can structure that. I think this is where my biggest concern lies in this referral to the Electoral Matters Committee. We had a huge quantum of evidence provided to the committee. We know what the best way going forward is when it comes to group voting tickets. We have seen in previous governments that agreement has not been made. There is the absolute will of the Australian Labor Party to ignore the recommendations and the evidence put before the Electoral Matters Committee and not reform the group voting tickets, even though we have these crazy results across the state which are not reflective of what people's voting intentions are.

Again, I will go through the examples from the previous election. Clifford Hayes, Sustainable Australia Party, representing Southern Metro district: 1.26 per cent of the vote, 5404 votes altogether. Yet through the preference whisperer Glenn Druery he ended up being a representative in this place, and of course he supported the Labor government on every single division. We got Rod Barton from the Transport Matters Party in Eastern Metro: 0.6 per cent of the vote, 2508 votes – that was it. He was elected to Parliament. Of course, because he had done a deal with Glenn Druery, the preference whisperer, he was in here. He had his deal done, and he voted in support of the Australian Labor Party. This must be called out. It is absolutely disgraceful that we have got this system in Victoria, and yet of course, because it benefits the government, there is not the ability or the appetite to reform it and make sure we have a fair democratic system in Victoria.

I do fear that this reference to again look at exactly what the Electoral Matters Committee looked at over the past two years is just to buy more time so we can see more deals done with the Labor Party and Glenn Druery, the vote whisperer, who gets to keep on doing what he has always done and making a lot of money out of it: getting elected individual parties, these micro-parties, who do not necessarily represent the views that they go out and purport to represent. It is actually something much, much more sinister: Labor is bringing into the parliamentary representation undercover people who are there just to support the Labor Party in getting their votes through the house in exchange for a profit for Glenn Druery at the end of the day, because he makes money out of the electoral allowances. That is wrong on every single level. I am very, very concerned that this default to have yet another inquiry about group voting tickets is just kicking it down the road. We will see that we have got another inquiry and another discussion about it, and more evidence will come through, but it will be the status quo for the Labor government because they do not want to see improvement. They do not want to see an end



to the corruption and the rorting of the upper house voting system in Victoria because they know that they benefit from it.

It is even dirtier than that. There was a significant amount of evidence heard that directly linked the CFMEU to some of these discussions. In some instances – this was particularly around the Animal Justice Party – they were the key people who were doing the deals behind the scenes. There was absolutely shocking evidence heard and submitted, which was video evidence, that showed clearly that deals had been done. They had been negotiated by Labor's mate the CFMEU, who we know donates a hell of a lot of money to the Labor government, and in return the Labor government would turn a blind eye to corruption on the Suburban Rail Loop. They will put a bit of extra money in there to make sure that all the union officials get that extra bit of money. Who cares how much it costs taxpayers at the end of the day? We have got an \$80 billion cost blowout on the Suburban Rail Loop. Where has that gone? Well, it goes in the money cycle of going to the CFMEU and being donated back to Labor. There is no interest at all from Premier Allan to clean this up, because she benefits from it. She is Premier today because of it. It absolutely must be cleaned up.

While I hope that this inquiry does have a speedy passage, I do put a lot of pressure on the Premier to make sure that this actually results in significant change to the group voting ticket in Victoria. In the minority report we have made a specific recommendation about group voting tickets – that the group voting ticket system should be replaced to match the federal Senate system. This is from evidence that we heard from many of the fabulous and esteemed psephologists that we have in this country. We can see there would be a consistency of approach where voters would not have to consider different voting systems, whether they are voting at a state or federal election. It would therefore bring a level of transparency, but most importantly we would get rid of this preference-whispering system which only leads to corruption of the parliamentary system, of the electoral commission and of the electoral system and which is getting a hell of a lot of money that is taxpayer funds. It should be about supporting parties – micro-parties and members of this place – but is instead being diverted to pay for Glenn Druery, the preference whisperer. In all instances, the people who are benefiting from Glenn Druery the preference whisperer are Labor Party MPs. It is wrong.

**Steve Dimopoulos** interjected.

**Emma KEALY:** Well, this was the evidence. I will pick up from the member for Oakleigh that it is one of the –

*Members interjecting.*

**Emma KEALY:** It is actually in the report, so if the Electoral Matters Committee report is now some sort of conspiracy theory, then I really think that reflects greatly upon the member.

**Steve Dimopoulos** interjected.

**Emma KEALY:** I so not think the member for Euroa is here at the moment actually. I would like to think the member for Euroa and I look a little different at this point in time. We are certainly incubating different things. I certainly have never been headbutted by a wombat, so I really do not know how that confusion may have happened.

But I do recommend that this inquiry happens rapidly. The information has already been received by the committee. We have already seen recommendations by the committee from the majority but also through the minority report. There is a way forward to tidy up the group voting ticket, and I know, with respect to the Labor members of the committee, that there is an appetite for change with this. Therefore I look forward to working with the members of our committee. This will be an inquiry that I hope can go forward in a reasonably wholesome way. I think that it has been a positive committee to work on so far. We have produced an excellent report, even if the member for Oakleigh thinks it is a conspiracy theory.

I do hope that all recommendations of this report are taken into account but more importantly that Premier Allan and the Labor government have the decency to respect the will of the committee and the will of the Victorian people, who want to ensure that we have a voting system in Victoria that reflects the voting intentions of Victorians and that we end up with parliamentary representation that is reflective of the majority of Victorians in this state. That would be fair, that would be right and that is what this Parliament and what the government of the day, the Labor government, should be striving for, rather than secret deals for preferences that are corrupt, unfair and not what the Victorian people expect.

**Luba GRIGOROVITCH** (Kororoit) (17:00): I was chair of the Electoral Matters Committee and very proudly sat by the member for Narracan as my deputy. Thank you for all of your hard work, and of course the members for Lowan, Preston and others that are here as well – Prahran. It was a very good committee, and we strived to work together as well as possible. As the member for Lowan did allude to, we produced a report which I am very proud of and I am sure other members of the committee are also incredibly proud of. I want to give a big thanks, of course, to the staff who worked tirelessly behind the scenes, mainly Dr Chris Gribbin but also the other staff members, who did a lot of work.

Our committee looked into the conduct of the 2022 Victorian state election, including the experiences of voters, candidates, parties and other stakeholders. The 2022 election, as we know, was the largest in the state's history, with record numbers of voters and candidates. Our overall assessment of the election was that it was fair and democratic; however, we did find that there are changes that need to occur.

The inquiry received more than 100 submissions. We held nine days of hearings and consulted with a number of political parties. We spoke to independent candidates, election officials, voters, representatives of the disability and CALD communities, academics, election experts and of course others. The committee's final report makes 98 recommendations and the committee has recommended several adjustments to the election timeline, including shortening the early voting period from 12 to seven days, but with longer hours. The report recommends the introduction of a code of conduct for candidates and campaigners, and as was alluded to before, I know that we all saw a lot of very poor behaviour in 2022. That is not something that any of us wants repeated. It calls for changes to the voting system for the upper house. The committee has recommended a similar voting system to the one that is used in the Commonwealth Senate. This would include eliminating group voting tickets and allowing voters to indicate multiple preferences above the line. The committee has also recommended more support for people to enrol and vote, increasing the level of transparency around elections and measures to ensure that elections are fair for all candidates and parties.

Elections, at the end of the day, are about giving all Victorians a say as to who should represent them in Parliament, and that is the most important thing. It has been over 20 years since the previous reforms occurred in Victoria, and I am really pleased that this government is giving us the opportunity to bat on and to do another inquiry. So, thank you very much. I look forward to chairing the Electoral Matters Committee, and again, thank you to my colleagues who worked tirelessly to get the report to happen. Thank you.

**Sam HIBBINS** (Prahran) (17:03): I rise to speak on the motion for a referral to the Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) as put forward by the government. As has been stated by other members, the Electoral Matters Committee has just finished a very substantial inquiry into the conduct of the state election, of which I was a member, and I acknowledge the other members of that committee and the staff as well.

It was an inquiry that looked at a vast range of issues related to the previous election, but importantly, it did look at group voting tickets, which I know has been an issue of concern for many people in Victoria for a long time now. Of course, the previous term's inquiry specifically did not look at group voting tickets, which was a decision of government. This inquiry did, and the evidence that the

committee heard from political parties, from psephologists and from everyday Victorians was overwhelming as to the need to abolish group voting tickets. The fact is they are undemocratic, and they undermine the integrity of elections here in Victoria. Some of the evidence that we heard during our hearings was absolutely extraordinary.

I mean, there was evidence of cash for preference deals, of fake jobs, of parties gaming the system – this is evidence that we heard at the inquiry – not going out there and trying to get a vote during a campaign but really going out there and trying to get a backroom deal or secret promises. These are things that really undermine the integrity of elections, and the committee recommendation was very clear: abolish group voting tickets. It could not have been any clearer. What it recommended was a system that is essentially like the Senate, like we have federally. Of course Victoria is the hold-out state – the only state to continue using group voting tickets in Australia – and the committee's recommendation was very clear: abolish group voting tickets.

The committee's report did touch on the upper house regions and the composition of the other place. The Leader of the House seemed to indicate that the Greens have a position on this. Well, that is completely false. Our position is very consistent with what was stated in the committee's recommendations. Importantly, what the committee said was:

Eliminating group voting tickets should occur independently of changes to the regions and must not be delayed in order to take place after or at the same time as changes to the regions.

The committee was very, very clear about that. It did refer an inquiry into the reforms of the electoral system and the impacts to EMC. Yes, look at the composition of the upper house, but in absolutely no way should it be used as an excuse to delay reforms to group voting tickets. There is one very clear reason of course. My understanding is, constitutionally, you actually need a referendum to change the composition of the upper house. You do not need that to change group voting tickets. I tell you what, the chances of getting a referendum up on any topic – let us say it is less than a 50–50 chance, one would think, at this particular juncture.

We are absolutely concerned that this inquiry could be used as just an opportunity to again kick the can down the road. We appreciate that the government has brought forward the reporting date to 2025 – not in an election year – which would give even greater scope or greater ability to enact any changes that might come out of that inquiry. But we would urge the government to urgently adopt the committee's recommendation to abolish group voting tickets, and to do that without delay, to restore integrity and to restore democracy to the upper house here in Victoria.

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (17:08): I also rise in support of the motion put forward in the name of the Leader of the House, and I would like to join with other committee members in thanking the secretariat – Sarah, Chris and others – and also my fellow members. As the member for Narracan knows, we explored a lot of important issues in the report to which the member for Prahran has just been alluding – some really important stuff on data issues and information technology. I say, as someone who was involved through my work in information technology, that the thing that makes it wonderful, which is the ability to store information microscopically and change it in an instant, also means it is sometimes not the perfect thing to use in an election where that ability means that people can defraud elections easily. I thought there was a lot of important consideration of those issues in the report. Also, I might just touch very briefly on the safety of campaigners and candidates, which I know the member for Kororoit alluded to – an important issue. Unfortunately, I am not sure it is the last time that we will be looking at that issue. I suspect, in elections to come, that we may yet need to look at it further.

There has been some brief debate in this place today about group voting tickets and upper house reform. I will just say on the topic of group voting tickets, having been involved in discussions with representatives of every other party that is here in this chamber, that for many, many years group voting tickets were understood to be a thing that helped to reduce informality. They were used to that effect. Certainly, if you turn back the clock 15 years, they were operating well, and no-one who I spoke

to from the Greens, from the Liberal Party or the Nationals thought otherwise. I think the allegation that they were particularly a mechanism that benefited the ALP is simply false, but I would agree with the member for Prahran and the member for Lowan that if you look at the Angry Victorians testimony and the video that the committee looked at you can certainly see that where Glenn Druery has taken group voting tickets to is somewhere very different to where they were and somewhere that we do not want them to be.

Very briefly, just coming to the nexus with upper house reform, there is a nexus of sorts there. If I can end perhaps by making one point on that, which was made as other committee members will know: it is that proportionality in electoral systems is not an endlessly beneficial good. Ultimately, while parties who get, say, 5 per cent of support in many systems are in a parliament, I think if a party gets 1 per cent or 0.1 per cent ultimately some parties are going to miss out. Some ideas deserve to die at the ballot box rather than making it into the chamber. But I will not go further in that direction, because that is no doubt something the committee will consider should this motion prove successful. I certainly think it should, and I commend it to the house.

**Wayne FARNHAM** (Narracan) (17:11): I am pleased to rise today on this motion. I think the important thing here, and other speakers have touched on it, is that we have already decided – the committee all worked together. There were people from all sides of the Parliament: we had the Greens, the cannabis party, Labor, Liberal and Nationals. We all sat there through the evidence. I came a little bit late into the committee, but it was a good committee. We worked pretty well together, but we all came up with the same conclusion: that group voting tickets need to be abolished. It has been very, very clearly stated by everyone that has spoken on this today that group voting tickets have to go. There is no room for them now in our electoral cycle.

It is always the way that when somebody finds a way to manipulate the system or cheat the system, the system has to change. It is as simple as that. That is what Glenn Druery has done. He has managed to cheat this system and to defraud the Victorian public into thinking they were voting for one thing when they were getting another. It is very, very simple. This is where this group voting system has to change. As far as the composition of the upper house goes, the member for Prahran summed that up quite well. It is probably not the biggest priority at the moment; the biggest priority is the group voting tickets.

As far as this goes, this motion here, this is just paralysis by analysis. We have already spent next to 18 months in a committee that has gone through all the recommendations and all the findings, and the number one thing we all agree on is the group voting ticket has to go. So why are we kicking it down the road? This government has an opportunity to facilitate change. Why won't the government take that opportunity? You have the chance. You might not be here after the next election; you have only got two-and-a-bit years left, so you might as well jump on board with it now. It has been very clearly stated in recommendation 17 that we should go to the federal system, the Senate system they have there. The problem is Victorians do not know who they are voting for anymore; it is really quite that simple.

The government does not need this inquiry to go to December 2025, which then will be only 11 months out from the 2026 election. Let us deal with the issue at hand. The composition of the upper house will take longer – I agree with the member for Prahran – but the actual group voting ticket now has to change. There is no need for it anymore. As I said, because of Glenn Druery's actions this government now needs to react. I do not think the Victorian public have faith in our voting system, and the Angry Victorians Party's testimony at the committee hearings was pretty damning. If I was any upper house MP that used Glenn Druery as a consultant, I would be a bit worried, because I do not think it is all above board. I really do not think it is all above board. I do not think any Victorian believes that if someone gets 1 per cent, 2 per cent or 3 per cent of the vote, the majority of people want them in Parliament – 97 per cent of people do not want them in Parliament, or 99 per cent. How does that occur? How does someone who gets 1 or 2 per cent of the vote end up being a member of Parliament? That is actually not democracy; that is manipulation. That is what it is, so let us call it out for what it

is, and let us change the system as per the committee's recommendations. That is what we sat there for 18 months for. Why would we sit there for 18 months and then kick the can down the road for the next committee to deal with after 2026?

I believe group voting tickets were recommended to be abolished at the 2018 election, but they still went through. How long do we let this behaviour go on? How long do we let Victorians get defrauded on their voting intention? Because this is what it is: it is fraud of their voting intention. They do not know who they are voting for if they tick a box, so let us make it transparent. It is what the Victorian public want. It is what they deserve, not just what they want. It is what they deserve, so let us get on board. Government, get on board. Get rid of the group voting tickets like has been recommended, and move on with reforming this space.

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (17:16): I would like to start in speaking to this motion by congratulating the Electoral Matters Committee for their excellent report and for the key recommendations that are attracting comment in this debate today. I support this motion, however, with some hesitation because, as other speakers have pointed out, there is a real risk that this motion may be used as cover by the government for dragging their feet on group voting reform. I hope that that is not the case, because the Electoral Matters Committee have explicitly recommended the abolition of group voting tickets and because they have stipulated that this must not wait for further work on the make-up of the Legislative Council.

I agree with the member for Preston and others who have spoken that group voting tickets are not working the way they were intended to. Where they are now is not where they were meant to be, and we certainly do not find ourselves well served by group voting tickets, because group voting tickets mean that we do not trust voters to allocate their own preferences. Every other relevant jurisdiction – the federal Senate, New South Wales and other states – that has ever had group voting tickets has got rid of them. The last and perhaps most notorious was Western Australia. Has anyone ever been elected to Parliament with 98 votes? Well, a guy living in the United States was elected to the upper house in Western Australia on 98 votes for the Daylight Saving Party. He was elected to the rural province of Western Australia that hated daylight saving the most. Because of group voting tickets, 98 votes were enough for this guy to have to leave his tech job on the west coast of the US and fly back to join the Western Australian upper house.

**A member** interjected.

**Tim READ:** That is right, member for Prahran – the ultimate fly-in fly-out worker, all due to the numerical mastery of one Glenn Druery. The peripatetic Mr Druery has worked for more parties than anyone else, I would imagine. He is currently Fatima Payman's chief of staff. The man keeps popping up everywhere, and due to his expert calculations there were, I think, eight members of the other place elected due to group voting after paying Druery \$50,000 or \$60,000 for a seat in the other place as a result of 2018 election. He was not so successful in the 2022 election. I think he only got about three elected in the most recent election, but after the 2018 election there were I think about eight MPs in the Victorian Legislative Council who had effectively bought themselves a seat.

Members of this Assembly should at least reflect on the fact that we got democratically elected, because not everyone in the other place was, and it is a stain on this state that we allow this practice to continue. It is more by luck than good management that it was not as bad after the 2022 election, and it could be just as bad or worse at the next election if this government does not get rid of group voting tickets. We could wind up with 98 votes electing some weirdo who barely knows what they stand for because they are more answerable to the guy who can manipulate the numbers than they are to the voters.

I have nothing but gratitude for the Electoral Matters Committee and their government chair for coming up with these recommendations, and I have confidence that this government will have the courage to finally abolish this corrupt system.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills***Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Steve Dimopoulos:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Sam GROTH** (Nepean) (17:20): I rise to speak on the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024. This bill has been introduced by the government in order to address and reflect changes to the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust's operations and remit. It includes the addition of the new convention centre in Geelong under the trust's administration. These changes have been broadly viewed by the sector as uncontroversial, with the bill necessary to address basic and expected changes to the trust's operations. However, it does not mean that there are not important conversations to have around some of the contents in this bill, the impact it will have on the sector and some of the broader contexts of the government's policy.

In line with what I have just mentioned, the main provisions of the bill revolve around changing the trust's name. It will change the name of the trust established by the principal act from the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust to the Victorian Convention and Event Trust, and this brings it in line with the expanded remit of that trust. It particularly centres around the addition of the Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre, which is due to open in 2026. With the track record of this government in opening assets we do not know if 2026 will be the date, but we all I guess hope it will be, especially for the Geelong region and for the events sector. The other noteworthy provisions increase the number of trustees from seven to nine and amend the legislation to remove powers from the Governor in Council, and it will transfer those powers back to the minister. This was described by the government as a measure to get things moving quickly – an expediency measure.

All the changes in this bill, though, do contribute to the impact on the stakeholders across the state, both changes for the better and changes that create a deal of uncertainty as the events industry moves forward into the next phase of its recovery after what was a challenging few years through that COVID period. There are concerns about this bill, though, as I mentioned, and there is definitely a feeling of uncertainty in the community and the industry around how certain changes will directly or indirectly impact them.

The event industry in Victoria is a big, big industry. It is made up of the people in the businesses involved in the professional creation and management of special events both in and from Victoria. It is an industry responsible for some 120,000 events a year and is worth in a normal year over \$15 billion to the Victorian economy. It covers things like conferences, exhibitions, brand activations, product launches, incentive programs, charity events, public and community events, festivals, mass participation events, weddings and of course our major events, which we are so proud of here in Victoria and which have been a key piece of what Victoria and Melbourne are known for by both sides of this house.

There are people involved in the events industry, and when you think not just about our major events, it is a lot broader than that. There are event companies, conference organisers and exhibition organisers. There are all the people who work in the audiovisual, the theming, the building of the stands, the exhibition rental, the lighting, the audio, the rigging, the staging, the guest management, the content creation – it is a very, very big industry. There are risk managers, production managers – I could keep going – all of the catering and the conferencing. It is a truly huge sector that provides a huge number of jobs to Victorians, and it is important we keep creating a sustainable environment for them to be able to operate in and the best conditions for them to do so.

There is also sometimes some confusion. I think it gets a little bit lost by this current government that, even though it does fall in my shadow portfolio and the minister's portfolio of tourism, sport and major

events, there is a big separation between tourism and sport and our events sector. I think it is just important for us to note that there is that separation. There is a different purpose, there are different economic and operational models and there are different people. While there are overlaps in some of those and some of those jobs that I did mention and those people involved will get involved in some of our major events, they are working predominantly in the events sector.

The government, in my opinion and that of some of those stakeholders that I have spoken to, only views the events industry in terms of hotel-room nights and then some of the trips to other assets around the state that they can deliver – trips down to the penguins and how it supports the tourism industry. Even though these are by-products of the industry, in the majority of cases they are not the main purpose or benefit of the event. In fact the vast majority of our events have little to no tourism benefits as they are local events. They are events held for people here. They are not bringing people necessarily into the city; they are for people here in Victoria or in Melbourne. The events industry is also an export industry, and we export a whole range of products and people to the rest of the world. For the big events that you see in other states or globally, there are people who are based here in Melbourne, and having a sustainable industry here allows them to also go out and do what they do right around the world. It is important to know that we need to make sure we are looking after what we do here so that those people can work here – and that is important – but they are also trained and built up to go out and deliver these events globally.

When we think about events, I think in this place or in this state we get very, very caught up quite often in photo opportunities and we think about our major events. Yes, we have a great major events calendar, most of which was handed to this government and very, very little they have built themselves. Things like the Australian Open, the grand prix, the comedy festival – these events only make up about just over 5 per cent of the events industry in economic terms. Much of what government refers to as major events – the art exhibitions at the NGV, theatre productions – actually have little to do with the event industry as a whole. Our events drive innovation and change across organisations and the community. They educate, they train, they motivate, they bring communities together and they create social cohesion. They fund and support the work of a large proportion of for-purpose organisations, and they give many people their most cherished experiences of this state, both socially and economically.

Coming out of the last few years the world has gone through unprecedented change, and these events are probably needed more than ever. It is really hard going in the events industry at the moment. There was little support for this industry through the pandemic period, because a lot of the people who work in the industry are self-employed. They did not have the ability to work during that time, and they did not necessarily have the ability to leave. We have got to make sure that our organisations like Visit Victoria, Sport and Recreation Victoria and Creative Victoria support the tourism, sports and arts very well, but we have got to make sure they are also supporting the events sector.

On this side of the house we have a very, very rich and proud history of supporting our events sector and our event venues, including the one mentioned in this bill, the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. The genesis of the Victorian government's continual support for these major infrastructure endeavours has focused on making us globally competitive. That all started back with the Kennett government in the mid-1990s, and we so often hear the convention centre referred to as Jeff's Shed. When the Melbourne Exhibition Centre Bill 1994 was brought before this house then Minister Gude described it as an opportunity to:

... attract both important Australian and international exhibitions and trade shows to Melbourne.

There can be no doubt that we all in this place can agree that it has certainly achieved that mission. It was administered by a department of the government that had a relentless passion for the events sector. It brought trade shows and an expansion of what has become a key industry for Melbourne and

Victoria as a whole. It was major reform aimed at supporting that industry, and it was a development that was:

... extremely competitive, with modern centres in Sydney, Brisbane, Singapore and Hong Kong vying for an increased market share.

I am sure everyone can agree that today we are still fighting with those other markets. I think this is why it is important that this new exhibition centre is brought on in Geelong, but it is also important that we support the sector as a whole. It was the spirit of competition and opportunity back then – it was industry led and government backed – that created the thriving events and exhibition market we saw in Melbourne through the 1990s and into the 2000s. But it is often said that complacency can be the greatest killer of competition and enterprise. We see now that the sector is suffering under what I believe is the complacency of this government after they have been in power now for 10 years. Even with this piece of legislation they are just dabbling around the edges of legislation instead of introducing real reform that could benefit the sector. We on this side will always continue to champion our events and tourism sector and bring meaningful reforms, and we are going to have a lot more to say in this space.

We have done that here; we have done it at times with our federal colleagues in Canberra. We have also done it whilst maintaining the support for private industry for those people who are having a go in the events sector – all those people that I mentioned – and making sure that they are properly supported, because when we are competitive like that with our government venues, it will continue to pump up the sector, pump up those people and bring the economic benefit to the state.

As I said, this government has done little to nothing in the events space. And I am not talking major events, I am talking about this events space that I have defined. They have done little to nothing in that space and have been more focused on housekeeping around the edges of the legislation. After COVID the sector demands and deserves more from this government than focusing on just the administrative minutiae of this place. They need a government that comes to the table with reform, helps deregulate and helps with investment and opportunity and consultations. I just think at the moment these are qualities that are missing from those on the other side of the chamber – a real vision for this space for Victoria.

This bill may seem inconsequential to some, and the fact that it is seen as inconsequential shows that there is a lack of focus from the minister and the Premier and the departments on the revival of our tourism and events space. We should be talking about proper reform, a restructure of our agencies that help administer these events. We should be talking about bodies that have a real focus on tourism, have a real focus on our major events and have a real focus on business events here in Victoria so we can best utilise our assets and show the Victorian people and the world that we truly are the events capital of Australia but also keep selling ourselves globally.

There is no doubt that the development of regional events centres is commendable, and it is something that we have also been proud of on this side. However, building and administering these centres is not the end of the government's responsibility in these areas. You cannot just have a 'build and run' mentality, leaving things like the convention centre or sporting events or tourism centres with developments that just sit there. Every time a bill in the events space comes before this house, we do see missed opportunity after missed opportunity. Geelong itself is one of the fastest growing cities in Australia, but thanks to this government's focus on Melbourne and inside the tram tracks, we have seen that a number of projects – and I will touch on some of those – that have been listed for Geelong have been cancelled in recent times. We need to make sure that we are delivering not just for Melbourne and the people here but also for regional Victoria.

The biggest one that comes to mind in recent times is of course that promise for regional Victoria of the Commonwealth Games, where people in Geelong and in other regional centres were promised a games for regional Victoria. They were promised a games that was going to bring the eyes of the world to those centres. But all we ended up getting was a \$600 million bill for the Victorian taxpayer, for a



games that is going to be held possibly somewhere in Scotland using Victorian taxpayers money, and projects that now will be delivered because the government feels like they have to deliver \$1 billion worth of infrastructure for, in some cases, something that is not actually needed. We do not want to see that happen with this centre, so I hope the government does have a plan for how they are going to increase the events sector and bring events to Geelong, because we do not want to see it just sit there.

I did mention earlier that there are a couple of concerns in and around the bill. One of those relates to the membership of the new trust being moved from seven to nine members. This was raised in the bill briefing by me and colleagues, and it has been raised by a number of stakeholders. We know the appointment to public boards and trusts is an opportunity to diversify the experience, both professional and lived, being brought to the table to address new issues and challenges. But with the Victorian Convention and Event Trust it is clear that with this new challenge and with the launch and integration of the Geelong Convention and Event Centre into the trust, we need to make sure that – and this has been raised, as I said – those two extra trustees have some sort of a link to the Geelong area or to the events sector as a whole. I think the stakeholders locally would like to see probably the first one as much as the second one. I know it has been mentioned that there is one member with a link to Geelong, currently, in the seven that sit there now, but we do want to make sure that the people who are going onto that trust do have the best interests for Geelong and a connection to that space, and we have addressed that with the minister and his office. When we did ask, the government sidestepped and did say they did have one member of the board living in Geelong, so we do continue to encourage them to look at that when they make those appointments. I am sure they will receive people from the Geelong area wanting to be put onto this trust once it looks like opening.

When you talk about the Geelong community – the government do hold seats down there, and we hope they are not neglecting that community – we want to make sure that there is an assurance that the Geelong community is going to be involved in probably what is going to be its largest tourism asset in the area. This is going to bring a lot of people to the Geelong area, and we want to make sure that they are having that engagement with local communities down there. We know that with the Commonwealth Games there was very, very limited local consultation, and we have been out there many times in that community and gone and seen a lot of the local sports, a lot of the venues and a lot of the people involved who said they were just told that this was going to happen, that there was very, very little consultation and then even after the cancellation very little consultation to make sure that the assets that were being delivered as a result of the cancellation, as a result of the government's spend in the future are actually what is needed by those local communities and that they are not just getting assets that are being delivered because the government promised them for the games. So we want to make sure that consultation continues.

Another one of the concerns I think that Geelong is facing when it comes to a venue of this size and the people it is going to deliver is actually making sure the connectivity of that city is matching the demand of the people who are going there. So things like public transport and access to Geelong become a lot more important. We know that Melbourne Airport is slated to get a third runway, and we now see that Melbourne Airport rail is going to go ahead after a number of years of fights and probably – well, we know – an extra cost that is going to be put onto delivering that as a project now. But once people fly into Melbourne or into Avalon we have got to make sure that they can then get from those airports out to this big convention centre and make sure the accessibility for those people when they are going there is applicable.

When you talk about that, it is probably disappointing to see that Labor's commitment to Geelong fast rail has been shelved or cancelled. It was another election promise to the people of Geelong or Victoria that was in all honesty probably nothing more than an empty commitment that was designed to win a bunch of votes in regional Victoria – a little bit like, I keep mentioning it, the Commonwealth Games was – and we know at the time then Premier Daniel Andrews and the now Premier who was the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Premier Jacinta Allan now, declared that the 250 kilometre-an-hour trains were set to be the fastest in Australia and would slash travel times, and less than 18 months

later the project was scrapped. There was little to no substantial work commenced on that, and it seems it was just another empty press release from this government.

The fast rail commitment came along with other promises for Geelong – yes, the convention centre and a children’s hospital. At the moment it looks like only the convention centre will be delivered, and as I said we hope that that is on time, but I guess the question that comes from locals now is: will it be delivered, when and for what price? This government are happy to focus on their massive metro projects, and we have heard more about it today with the metro rail, and it does not matter that it is a secret letter that is going to reveal another \$888 million in cost for the people of Victoria just to try to get that delivered on time, but when it comes to regional Victoria and to Geelong they have only been too happy to announce things and then scrap or shelve them, and the Geelong fast rail is an example of that.

The success of any events centre is dependent on the ability for attendees to access the centre readily from anywhere in the state or interstate or internationally, so I would hope that there is a focus on understanding by 2026 how we are going to get all these people out to Geelong in the best way possible and not just putting more buses on roads out through western Melbourne and out to Geelong. We want to make sure there is investment in rail connectivity to Geelong. We want to see an expansion of the road network, and also I think some private-sector investment absolutely will be critical in trying to get this done. We also want to make sure that when people are in Geelong – and we actually heard a little bit of this around consultations prior to the Commonwealth Games being cancelled, that the Geelong bus network needs a complete rework as well.

As the biggest growing regional city here in the state, at the moment you catch a bus out in the suburbs, you go into the city interchange and then you go back out again. There is going to have to be more bus connectivity around Geelong, because once people get down there, they are not going to be stuck inside the convention centre. They will want to make sure they are going to get out to the rest of the area. I do say there needs to be a real debate about how this government has pushed our regional centres to the side. I think the other point that we want to see in terms of infrastructure, to make sure that this is successful, is Bellarine link – the Geelong Ring Road extension – which was announced in 2017 and is still not funded beyond initial planning and scoping works. That was seven-odd years ago, and we still have not seen that go ahead.

Another thing that was raised in terms of questions about this bill was how the reporting for each convention centre will be presented. The addition of the Geelong convention centre does really give the government a monopoly on large conferences and the large conference sector here in Victoria, but it also means there will be more competition than ever between these two venues, I would hope. I know on this side of the house we believe that competition is a good thing. Some of the stakeholders and members on this side have queried whether there will be separate annual reporting for each venue to make sure that we can actually see that commercial performance and competition between these venues is taking place and that there is transparency around that as well.

Unsurprisingly, there are questions about the statement of expectation from the minister related to these venues. We know that the minister will provide his written expectations for the trust overall, as we were told, but with such important venues under its purview it seems clear that a statement of expectation for each one would be enormously beneficial. That is maybe just something for the minister to think about. Obviously he will write that for the trust, but if he can do that for both and set clear guidelines for what each of these convention centres want to achieve, I think that would be beneficial to all Victorians. They are complex venues. They are operating in a tangled web of commercial competition and bureaucracy. As I said, the minister should be outlining the government’s expectation in relation to each facility – or will this minister shy away from setting those specific KPIs? We just want to see that he does that. These are important projects for Victorians. I think Victorians deserve to know that they are working properly, and I just think reporting procedures for these venues – separate reporting – will be important.

This convention centre has already, in line with most other government projects here in Victoria, seen its share of blowouts. We have seen \$160 million in blowouts already through the build of this convention centre, and we are still a couple of years off opening. It is not the only blowout the government has tried to distract us from or has seen since its time on the government benches over there in the last 10 years, but by \$163 million so far has the cost of building this new Geelong convention centre gone up. We also know there is a whole list that the Shadow Minister for Finance, the member for Kew, found in a recent FOI document – a whole range of government blowouts across a number of smaller projects. We all know the major projects in Victoria that have blown out and the more than \$40 billion of cost blowouts across those, but I think that it is these smaller blowouts – I say smaller, but \$163 million is not a small amount of money – that are starting to really add up in this state. I think that people are starting to question, especially with what we have seen recently with the CFMEU and the industrial action today: are the Victorian taxpayers being taken for a ride?

When you go through the more than 100 government contracts for capital works that have been varied over the last couple years, just to name a few – I do not want to go through these; I have got pages and pages of these blowouts – there are things like the Victoria Police commissioner office refurb; the Sunshine law courts redevelopment; the Ballarat station upgrade; the glasshouse replacement in Horsham; Balnarring Primary School in your electorate, Acting Speaker Mercurio, had a cost blowout; the recycled water in Kyneton; and the Shepparton youth prevention hub. We have got \$1.4 million for facade upgrades and restoration at Little Malop Street in Geelong. It just continues to add up. All of these cost blowouts continue to add up. So another \$163 million – we just hope that we do not see that number going up as we go through and get closer to this being delivered.

I have mentioned it a couple of times, but if you want to discuss broken promises and cost blowouts, one that is directly related to Geelong is the \$600 million wasted on cancelling the Commonwealth Games. That has to be right at the top of that list. We know that the Auditor-General described the significant waste of taxpayer money and the government's costings as being overstated and not transparent, and that is not something uncommon for this government – overstated because it double counts costs relating to industrial action risks and cost escalation risks. We just want to make sure that, as we move forward, the tourism, sporting, major events and events sectors are all supported properly and the government does proper work on business cases, on planning and on building. We do not want to see another white elephant out in regional Victoria like the Commonwealth Games. The Premier has described herself as one not to cut and run when challenges get hard, but as I said, she has bungled airport rail. The Suburban Rail Loop keeps going up and up and up, and we have no idea how the government is going to build that. The Commonwealth Games is a debacle. We just want to make sure that our tourism and major events and our events sector as a whole are being supported properly, but after 10 years of this government I just struggle to see how.

I did mention before that the government will have a monopoly on the major convention and events industry now with the building of this, and there has been some concern raised by the hotel sector. We know most of our major hotels here in Melbourne have convention spaces and have conference spaces mostly in that 100- to 400-person range. They are in direct competition already with the government when it comes to the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, and there is some concern from the industry, from that private sector, that now they are going to be outbid on a lot of these smaller events. They are hoping that the government will stick in their lane and the MCEC will stick in their lane when it comes to those larger style events and still allow the private sector, who are going to see 28 per cent more hotel stock come online in the next year or so here in Melbourne, the opportunity to bid and not be outbid consistently by these larger event centres. They hope that they will continue to try to attract larger conferencing events to Melbourne and to Geelong but that the hotels can keep doing the work that they do, because the CBD is struggling, and that private sector is important.

We need those hotels online. We need them for when our major events do happen. We do need them during the tennis and we do need them during the grand prix, but they survive through Q2 and Q3 by running these smaller style conferencing events. I also think that the government needs to do more in

trying to work with that private sector, with those hotels, to make sure in Q2 and Q3, those winter months when less people are coming for our major events – yes, footy is going on, but it is people coming in and out from the suburbs, going to the MCG or to Marvel Stadium – that we have got events happening within those hotels. It is a concern that the monopoly on conferencing events with those multiple venues now may drive some of that private sector investment or competition into the ground.

I also just want to say another thing this government needs to do. It is one thing to build an asset, but you need to make sure you keep funding the industry properly. We saw in the budget this year a huge cut to the tourism, major events and events space: 60 per cent of that budget was cut out, more than \$280 million from last budget for that sector. Make no mistake, it is an unprecedented cut caused by the financial mismanagement of the Allan Labor government. It is an absolute disgrace that we have money being cut out from destination marketing at a time when we have fallen behind Sydney and we have fallen behind Queensland in terms of our tourism numbers, those numbers coming to Victoria. We are recovering slower than every other state in terms of pre COVID. We are falling behind. Other than the Northern Territory, we are recovering slower than every other mainland state in Australia. We have got to make sure we keep investing properly in our tourism, our major events and our events sectors, and that is through destination marketing.

We also know that Western Australia made in its most recent budget a huge investment in this space, a record investment, and we do not want to see anything going interstate. We want to make sure that people keep coming here and events keep coming here, but when you have got Western Australia going and investing \$200 million-plus in destination marketing and major events funds and you have got Queensland, who have spent more in the last three months on their *Bluey* campaign around tourism than we are due to spend in the next three years on our destination marketing, you have got to be concerned about the future of our tourism and our events in Victoria because, when that investment is being made elsewhere and not here, people have options.

We can spend a lot of time and this government spends a lot of time talking about the events that we retain, but we have got to spend more time thinking about how we can keep pushing forward, because if you are not going forward you are going backwards. So while we will not be opposing this bill, we just want to see the government doing more in this space and investing properly in our events sector.

**Colin BROOKS** (Bundoora – Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts, Minister for Creative Industries) (17:50): Acting Speaker Mercurio, can I say you look so presidential in that chair as Acting Speaker, and your command over the house is something to behold. I am really impressed that the member for Nepean was able to do the full 30 on that contribution – well done. I do not know if I agree with everything that has been said, and I will run through that as I make my contribution. But as the member has said and as the minister quite clearly set out in his second-reading speech – and I think if you read the bill itself it is pretty easy to read – it is a bill that does expand the functions of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust. It also modernises the governance of the trust and the operational provisions. It is a pretty straightforward bill in terms of the mechanics.

Importantly – and this is what I want to focus on as well – it does reflect the trust's new role as the operator of the Geelong Convention and Event Centre. A really important part of what this bill does is allow the trust to do that. The new Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre will be fantastic when it opens in 2026. Of course this is a really important piece of our infrastructure for tourism, for the hospitality sector and for our economy and jobs.

Listening to the member for Nepean talk about a lack of focus on this sector and his concerns about all of the issues to do with visitations and the events sector in Victoria you would be forgiven for thinking things were pretty gloomy, but those opposite tend to run Victoria down at every opportunity they get. Whether it be in the media or in this place, everything is anti-Victorian. But let me tell you, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events is doing a great job in promoting tourism in this state and attracting visitations to Victoria. In 2023 Victoria recorded \$37.8 billion in tourism spending. That is bigger than the 2019 figure. So we have smashed through the COVID period and we are now

seeing \$37.8 billion in tourism spending in Victoria. That is good for jobs and it is good for Victorians. We know some people opposite do not like good news for Victoria, but that is what we are doing – delivering economic growth for Victorians and great jobs for Victorians right across the state. Global travel has generated \$6.4 billion of that figure as well, so that is not just about attracting people from within Victoria to visit things or people from interstate, it is also about people coming from overseas – \$6.4 billion worth of global travel generation.

As I said, I acknowledge the hard work of all the people who work in that sector, the people who work in private enterprise and the people who work in the government sector, in Visit Victoria, in the department and right up to the minister himself, who does a great job. I want to acknowledge the fact that creative industries do play an important role in this space as well in terms of attracting visitations and generating jobs in that space.

In those figures I just mentioned, total domestic expenditure in Geelong and Bellarine in that period was up by 72 per cent compared to 2019. So what we have seen is not just a Melbourne-led recovery but a Victorian recovery. As the member for Bellarine knows, that is important for regional centres like Geelong and Bellarine as well – 72 per cent up on 2019 figures. So Victoria is back. Victorians got through COVID, and now we are back in a really, really big way, and people want to come to Victoria to experience our natural beauty in Victoria, the natural wonders of this great state, but also the great events that are put on through the hard work of many, many people.

That takes me to the Geelong Convention and Event Centre that is being constructed – Nyaal Banyul. It is funded as part of the federal Geelong City Deal, but it is important to note, I think, the contributions being made to that project. The Victorian government is contributing \$416 million to that project. The Australian government is contributing \$30 million, and we welcome that. But there is a significant investment by the Victorian government in that significant piece of infrastructure. I acknowledge the City of Greater Geelong – \$3 million. That total commitment is important, but it again shows that the Victorian government is driving that investment in regional Victoria because we know that places like Geelong are so important and that we have to drive that visitation experience when people want to be able to visit Geelong.

That venue will see a purpose-built convention centre, exhibition spaces, a 1000-seat venue, two large exhibition spaces, meeting rooms, facilities, flexible event spaces – some 3700 square metres of event space. This is going to be a massive boost for the Geelong region and for Victoria. I think it is a really good thing to celebrate and not to run down. It includes a 200-room Crown Plaza hotel, adding to the accommodation offering in Geelong and that region. It is just fantastic, transforming what is about 1.5 hectares of waterfront car parking into a world-class convention centre. It is a wonderful investment in our state by the Labor government here in Victoria. Those opposite I think described it as dabbling around the edges. That is not dabbling around the edges, that is solid investment in Victoria from this government.

I want to acknowledge in that particular project the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, who gifted the name to the convention and event centre there. That of course means ‘open your eyes to the hills’, Nyaal Banyul. I think we should recognise the generosity of the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation with that name but also their cooperation and collaboration in working with the development partners around the design of that particular facility and in incorporating some of the culture and history and heritage of those people in this important project.

One of the parts of that project that I want to touch on is that the Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre has a great social procurement program that engages people in a 12-week training program. I understand that 12 of the workers through that program have already started and that 16 more are coming through. By the time that program is completed there will be 28 people who will have received 12 weeks of fully funded training, which will count towards a certificate II in construction pathways through Gordon TAFE. So not only is this great for the jobs that are involved

in that project now and the tourism jobs that it will generate for that region, but it is also providing opportunities for people in the construction sector who might not otherwise get that opportunity.

This project is coming hot on the heels of the Geelong Arts Centre redevelopment, an incredible project opened in August last year by I think Jessica Mauboy amongst others. I was not at the event, but I am told it was a cracking night.

**Chris Couzens** interjected.

**Colin BROOKS:** The member for Geelong was there, I am sure. It is a fantastic, wonderful addition to Victoria's creative industries but also a great addition for Geelong – a \$140 million development there on Little Malop Street: a 550-seat theatre, the Story House; a 250-seat theatre, the Open House; a wonderful foyer and design; and bar facilities and restaurants. It is a wonderful addition to the whole state, not just to Geelong. It is something that Geelong should be very proud of. When I was there recently, one of the things that I was struck by was the fact that they attract not just international and Australian stars and great performances to that venue but local school kids and the local community as well, so it serves a great purpose. It is in a great precinct there in Geelong; Back to Back Theatre is literally next door. Of course we should recognise that Back to Back Theatre won the Venice Biennale Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement, a really important achievement for that wonderful local arts organisation.

In the time I have got left it is worth just pointing out that the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre itself continues to kick goals here in Melbourne. Anyone who has been down to the Lume exhibition at the centre will I am sure have enjoyed that. It is a great creative experience as well. I think *Leonardo da Vinci* is still running; it is a great program. And of course there is news that Melbourne will be hosting the 2025 World Chambers Congress.

That will see about a thousand business leaders from around the world – it is one of the big events – come right here to Melbourne in 2025. Despite the naysaying of those opposite that everything is doom and gloom, people are coming back to visit Victoria. Victorians are seeing a booming visitor economy growing again. This is all good for jobs, it is great for our economy, and it is great for Victoria.

**Peter WALSH** (Murray Plains) (18:00): I rise to make a contribution on the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024. I suppose in responding to the member for Bundoora, who believes that we are all gloom and doom, can I tell the member for Bundoora that there is actually light at the end of the tunnel: there will be a change of government in November 2026, and Victoria will be much better off. The member for Bundoora can look forward to that happening and to seeing Victoria start to really blossom again after that election.

The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Jeff's Shed as it was when it started – I think we owe a lot to the vision and the drive of Jeff Kennett when he was Premier to actually get this –

*Members interjecting.*

**Peter WALSH:** Those on the other side can heckle. They will never, ever give credit where credit is due. Jeff's Shed is an important part of the convention centre down there. It was expanded under Steve Bracks. The last expansion was started under Louise Asher and continued on after we lost government. Big projects in Melbourne like that owe their existence to successive governments and quite often a change of government if they are good for the state. And the exhibition centre has been good for the state. As I understand it, it is the largest exhibition centre in Australia, seating 5500 people in the plenary hall and 70,000 square metres, so it is an important part of Melbourne and of Victoria. I think the renaming of it to Victoria instead of Melbourne is a great thing from a regional Victorian point of view. It is a pity some more things like that would not happen.

But I want to spend my time actually talking about some of the events that have been run down there. If we go back to the time when Ted Baillieu was Premier, this state had a \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund – imagine what would happen to the regions if we had a \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund again.

That did a lot of things in regional Victoria. But one of the things that did for regional Victoria in Melbourne was fund the Regional Victorian Living Expo. That was held down at the convention centre in Jeff's Shed there. It was put on. There was money provided to each of the 48 regional councils to take stands there. From memory I think they got \$20,000 to fund the cost of their stand, fund the cost of staff and fund the cost of councillors coming down to man those stands to sell regional Victoria to Melburnians who might want to shift out there. Over 10,000 visitors went through most years. There were other exhibitors, including real estate agents and those people that wanted to attract workers out – something like 130 exhibitors, including those 48 rural and regional councils.

It was a success. It was a huge success. I can remember at that stage Warracknabeal was in my electorate. Warracknabeal is in the Yarriambiack shire. The Yarriambiack shire had a stand there, and they had some particular trades they were short of in the town. One of those was there was no panelbeater in Warracknabeal – a large town without a panelbeater. A panelbeater and his family were walking through; they stopped and talked to the people from the Yarriambiack shire and realised they would not mind shifting to regional Victoria. Out of that expo Warracknabeal got a panelbeater. That example flowed on in lots of other towns and lots of other trades.

In 2013 the Loddon shire, which is partly in my electorate, won the best council exhibition award. They had information about housing availability in the shire, work and education opportunities for people and the lifestyle factors as to why people would want to move to the Loddon shire. I know they got people to relocate to the Loddon shire out of that. As part of the Murray River Group of Councils, they had a \$4000 houseboat package as a prize for the people that came through and put things in the box at the regional expo. The regional expo was not a huge amount of money, a small component of the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund that was there for the regions, but an important way of marketing regional Victoria to people in Melbourne to move out and live and work in regional Victoria.

On coming to government the Andrews government under Jaala Pulford, the minister, ran the event for one more year because there was still some money in the pot, and then they chopped it. They just not did care about regional Victoria. It is just another example of, on coming to government, what the Andrews government did and what the ministers did to effectively ignore regional Victoria. The \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund is no more. Regional Development Victoria is effectively no more because they have no staff anymore. They have no money to administer other than through the Tiny Towns Fund. So tragically, after the first year under Jaala Pulford and the Andrews government, the regional living expo was scrapped. I think that is making the state poorer both for the regions and for the city.

The other thing I wanted to touch on is the Melbourne Boat Show. Those that have got electorates on the bay will be going to the Melbourne Boat Show because they know how big boating is right across Victoria, but particularly in the bay. The member for Mordialloc would know how important it is for his electorate to have all those fishermen down there and all those boats that are tied up down there. I have been to the Melbourne Boat Show for quite a few years, and one of the guys I have got to know there is Charlie Micallef, who is a fishing charter operator further down on the peninsula than the member for Mordialloc. Charlie used to run the stage show there and get people up, get kids up, and have competitions up on the stage to get people involved in fishing. The kids absolutely loved it. I have not gone, but for those who have the opportunity to go down there, Charlie runs a great fishing charter business for those who do not have their own boat but want to go and actually do some fishing. For those that have not been to the boat show, I would encourage them to go, but when you walk around the boats that are there, when you see the options to buy and you then look at the prices, they are rather expensive. There are some great boats made here in Victoria. There are some really key manufacturers out Dandenong way that display every year, and some people in Geelong, because it is a great recreational industry.

The boat show, again, is utilising the original vision that Jeff Kennett had to have a world-class exhibition centre here to showcase whatever the particular issue is. No doubt many of the other MPs in this house have been to functions down there. I have had the opportunity over a number of years to

go to the Bus Association Victoria annual dinner down there, an event in a place that is really in competition in some ways with Crown Casino. It is a very different venue but provides an opportunity for major events. For the bus association, they have their conference and their displays and then take a different escalator up to a different part of the building and have their big dinner that night and do that there.

This bill, as has already been said, is a functional bill that changes the name, changes the size of the board, changes some of the reporting and incorporates the Geelong convention centre as well into this particular piece of legislation.

I would just like to finish off, again for the other side's benefit, by saying thank you, Jeff Kennett, for what you did in actually getting this going.

*Members interjecting.*

**Peter WALSH:** I am just being Charlie Micallef, throwing a lure out and catching some people on the other side that have come hook, line and sinker into the boat. They have jumped in the boat. I do not even have to get a net to get them in, they have jumped in the boat so much. But thank you, Jeff Kennett, for what you did to start this off. Minister D'Ambrosio at the table might laugh, but credit where credit is due: he had the vision; he had the drive. We would not have the Tullamarine Freeway; we would not have the Bolte Bridge. We would not have had a lot of the infrastructure that we have in this state without Jeff Kennett.

*Members interjecting.*

**Peter WALSH:** We would have actually had an east-west link.

*Members interjecting.*

**Peter WALSH:** I know. I am enjoying it, because you have got no respect for other people that actually do things. I wish this bill a speedy passage, and I must admit, I am going to enjoy pulling the fishhook out of those on the other side that actually got caught.

**Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (18:10):** It was good to reflect on the halcyon days of the Liberal-National party. I think they could have actually governed as the Liberal Party in their own right back in those days when they actually built infrastructure, because clearly at the moment the Liberal-National party do not want to build any infrastructure. Before I get on to the bill, I do hope that some of our large contingent of regional MPs take up the Leader of the National's point of debate about what this government has done for regional Victoria. Obviously I am a metropolitan MP, but I can see all the discounted public transport fares, the investment in infrastructure, the investment in health and the investment in schools. So I do hope that I am joined by my regional colleagues, who can just espouse how much this government over 10 years has been investing in regional Victoria.

As has been said, this is about the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024. It has some minor but important changes in terms of changing the name of the act and the trust that it established and modernising the trust membership and governance. One of the major reasons for that is to expand its role, particularly as it becomes the operator of the Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre. I think this is a really important step in the events space. Melbourne traditionally has been known as an events capital for quite a long time, and I think that we have worked as a government to broaden that appeal. It should not just be Melbourne as the events capital, it is Victoria. We even see this with the motorbike grand prix, which is not in Melbourne; it is in Phillip Island, in a regional area.

I still remember the old Tourism Victoria ad, which was 'You'll love every piece of Victoria'. It is not just about showcasing Melbourne; Victoria is a small and compact enough state that it is fairly easy to get around, with access from our main international airport if you are coming particularly from overseas or interstate, and obviously we have got another airport in Avalon. That access and that



compactness lends itself to being able to have events, promoting the state right across the state and bringing those benefits right across the state. Exhibition centres such as these provide a huge economic boon to the state and to the state economy. I will agree with what the member for Nepean mentioned in this case. Some of the events, whether they are international or national events, are attracting a lot of visitors. They are really driving the visitor economy. Then there are other events which are bringing in people primarily from the metro area, or if it is in the Geelong region it will be bringing in people primarily from the Geelong area.

Each of these events and these events centres are massive employers of people. If you have an event on or a function on for three days, you will have a slew of speakers. You have people catering through that time, setting up the event, taking down the event. You will usually have a formal dinner, a gala dinner during that period of time, so caterers and restaurants get involved. There is a whole set of event infrastructure that connects to this industry. It is a real strength of our state. As the member for Nepean also said, this is an area where we connect sport knowledge. We have such a great strength built up over so many years of working in the event space that it is something we are really good at and as a state we should be promoting and extending.

I was looking at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre's latest report, which was from 2022–23, and just having a look at some of the positive impacts that it is having on the economy. It generated more than \$805 million in economic impact to the state. That is almost \$1 billion. That is a huge impact that events are having in the state. It is doing a lot for community organisations and also in terms of its environmental footprint. It has started the journey to net zero, and it has invested more than \$2.2 million, which it has donated in kind to charities and community organisations just in that last year alone. I also looked at what it has on the calendar for 2024, and it is a jam-packed calendar, as you would want. If the government makes an investment in event infrastructure, you want the facility to be fully utilised, and I am sure that when the Geelong facility opens in 2026 there will be exhibitors waiting at the door wanting to sign up and use that facility.

**Chris Couzens** interjected.

**Paul HAMER:** As the member for Geelong says, they already are, which is fantastic news. So from day one of opening it is going to be full, which is going to be fantastic news not just for all of the workers involved using that facility but also then for the accommodation and flow-on benefits that that provides.

In 2024 the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre has been registered for 103 events. Often these are multiday events, so there would be hardly a day that goes by that there is not an event, or if there is not an event, they are either preparing for an event or cleaning up from a previous event. I was just looking – you could go every month and go to a fantastic event. In January and in fact over the entire summer, they had the *BBC Earth Experience* with David Attenborough, which was a show or a film, I guess. I am sad I missed that. They are always fantastic documentaries – what a fantastic documentary maker. In February there was Australia's largest baby expo, and if you did not get there, do not worry; there is another one in October. There is another baby expo coming to the Melbourne exhibition centre in October.

The International Women's Day Longest Lunch was in March. April saw the police career expo. We have the largest police force in the country, but we still need good people out there to join the police force. It is a challenging but rewarding career. What an opportunity if you are thinking of joining the police force to go along to an expo and see what it is about. Now, this is very Melbourne: in May was the Melbourne International Coffee Expo. I am not the biggest coffee drinker, but I think that would have been the place to be in May – the Melbourne convention centre at the Melbourne International Coffee Expo. In June was Comic-Con. Again, that is probably not my sort of thing.

**Steve McGhie** interjected.

**Paul HAMER:** Comic-Con, where you do a bit of cosplay and dress up as your favourite character. I did see there was another exhibition on the weekend. I saw when I was doing my street stall on Saturday there were a number of people dressed up, going on the train and getting out to the Melbourne convention centre for another exhibition. It was really terrific. In July we saw the bridal and wedding expo – I know I have passed that – as well as the National Food Waste Summit. That is such an important topic at the moment, so again that is bringing people from across the country, minds across the country, to ponder how we are going to tackle that. The home show was on just last weekend. I did not manage it last weekend, but that is always a favourite of mine and you always get great ideas for how to do some home improvement. Next month is the Australia–China Economic Trade and Investment Expo, which I am really looking forward to, and I have been invited in my capacity as the Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Growth to attend that event. China is a massive trade partner, and I really look forward to that. I could go on and on, but my time is up. I commend the bill to the house.

**Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (18:20):** I rise to make a contribution to the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024. It is a fairly light-on bill because it is fairly simple, what needs to be done. Essentially the establishment of the Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre needs to be rolled into the existing Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust, so with that pretty well brings a change of name and a lot of references that get changed throughout the act. You will see that where there is a reference to ‘Melbourne Convention and Exhibition’ the words ‘Victorian Convention and Event’ are substituted. It is all very much to bring the Geelong Convention and Event Centre in line with what is already existing.

We know that the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre has conferences. It can have over 5000 people at plenary sessions. They have concerts and entertainment. There is the Lume, and I imagine a lot of people have been to the Lume; it is absolutely fantastic. There are gala events and exhibitions. I know that most people in this chamber would certainly have been there for a number of different types of occasions. I want to mention Natalie O’Brien, who is the CEO. She has been there a little while, but previously Peter King had been there for quite some time. I commend them on the work they have done, because it really is a fabulous area.

Of course this is overseen by the trust. The minister’s own second-reading speech refers to the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre as the ‘premier convention and exhibition facility’, and now it is looking to have a little bit of competition perhaps from the one in Geelong – although it will not be quite so sizeable. The bill establishes that the trust will oversee the functions and operations of the new Geelong convention centre and, interestingly, meet the emerging needs of Victoria’s tourism and events industries. I am not quite sure what that means, but I will come back to that a little bit later.

I want to first of all outline a little bit of the history in this space. We started with the World Congress Centre down at the western end of town, and in 1996 the then Premier Jeff Kennett built the exhibition centre. It was then and probably still is known as ‘Jeff’s Shed’ and it has been remarkably successful. There have been so many different types of exhibitions there, and different sizes of exhibitions as well, from very large to quite small and niche.

In 2004 the then Premier Steve Bracks planned to add the convention centre as we know it. This is quite interesting because it was costed at \$367 million. That was the total estimated investment in 2004, then it grew a little bit with \$43 million from the City of Melbourne. But when it opened in 2009 it actually cost \$1 billion, so it more than doubled. I am glad that the Labor DNA is actually well and truly what we are seeing. These cost blowouts now have been established for the last couple of decades. When you see that go from \$370 million to a billion-dollar blowout, it is really quite extraordinary. We had the expansion of the convention centre announced in 2015 and completed in 2018, and now most recently we are seeing the establishment of the Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre. It is intended to be the pre-eminent regional venue.

The funding details of this are also quite interesting. The government is contributing \$416.1 million to the project. The federal government is kicking in \$30 million – that is not terribly much – and the City of Greater Geelong \$3 million. So the total commitment is about \$450 million. I am adding another 30 per cent for the cost blowouts, which is another \$135 million. We can see that there was an article in the *Geelong Advertiser* on 18 December 2023, so very recently. It says:

The cost of the Geelong convention centre precinct has ballooned, with the state government expected to fork out a further \$163m for the project than initially anticipated.

What a surprise, a blowout on another Victorian government project. The convention centre was set to cost \$294 million in July; however, now the state government has had to pour more than \$400 million into the project. Goodness me. We certainly know that this government cannot manage projects of varying scales, whether it is the Metro Tunnel, the Big Build, the Suburban Rail Loop – whatever it is. And we see it here with the Geelong convention centre.

The bill establishes a number of details around the governance and operating arrangements, and we see that the number of trust members has gone from seven to nine. One of the things that is concerning there is: now that it has Geelong attached – and it will – are those two additional trust members going to be Geelong-specific? Because you need somebody who can really advocate for the needs of that convention centre there. The bill outlines the role of the deputy chairperson and the acting chairperson. It also talks specifically about vacancies and meetings. That is pretty well it, but there are certainly a number of queries that I have in relation to this bill.

If we are bringing the Geelong Convention and Event Centre under the same umbrella as the Melbourne convention centre, I would expect that there are two very separate financial statements. It is unclear whether the CEO will be the same person and whether that CEO will have oversight of both centres or just the one. That is unclear. And I think if they are having the two separate centres, there are going to be times when they are possibly competing for the same exhibitor. We know certainly that the exhibition centre that we have at the moment down on Spencer Street is really quite large. It can have over 5500 people at the plenary sessions. There are 26 exhibition bays. Those bays can be small and they can be large, and you can have multiple exhibitions at the one place. There are going to be two large exhibition spaces down at Geelong, so I do not know whether that means they are competing and how it is that the trust, as they are overseeing these two centres, are going to decide ‘We’re really going to push this one for Geelong’ or ‘We’re really going to push this one for Melbourne’. They will both have their KPIs, but it is very uncertain how that will work.

I do not know how easy that is going to be, because we know that the one in Melbourne has three plenary areas, with a couple that hold 1400 people. We have got another one that is 2400, and collectively that is over 5500 people that they can seat there. The Geelong centre is around about 1000, so it is slightly different. Then there would be plenty of sessions at Melbourne that are less than the capacity. I know that I have been to some that are less than the capacity. It is going to be interesting how they juggle that. If the finances of one are not looking as good as they should be, are they going to say, ‘We’re really going to push this one down to Geelong,’ or not? I think that is something that really needs to be looked at closely.

I want to come also to the second-reading speech, because I am not 100 per cent sure what it means. It mentions that there may be a broader role for the trust to support the sector to address existing and emerging issues and challenges. What exactly does that mean? It gives a couple of examples that there are potential opportunities – developing training to support the sector. How is this going to work with Visit Victoria, with the Victoria Tourism Industry Council, with existing bodies? It is looking at becoming a registered training organisation. This is there for a reason. It is not just popped in there as a ‘maybe’. These are opportunities that are being flagged, but we really do not have any information about it. Also there is showcasing the industry or strengthening career pathways through, for example, a centre of excellence – there is nothing in the bill, obviously, about that except for the second-reading speech. I am really unsure exactly what that means and how that is going to work.

I also just want to flag that the importance of these types of convention centres, whether they are in Melbourne or Geelong, is the flow-on effects into tourism more broadly, because we have the delegates. When you are at an event there are excursions organised, and we want those excursions to come into regional Victoria. If they are in Geelong, they should be heading down the Great Ocean Road. The ones in Melbourne – I want them out at Healesville. I want them in the Yarra Valley. There is so much to do there, whether it is ballooning, the Healesville Sanctuary, Blue Lotus Water Garden, the chocolaterie or Phillip Johnson's recreation of his award-winning Chelsea garden show at Olinda. We have got redwood forest, Four Pillars – there are Puffing Billy historic rail rides out of Healesville. There is a lot to do. It is important that when you have delegates going on excursions, especially internationals and partners, they get out into the regions, but more importantly, we want to be encouraging them to get out into the regions and stay the night. If they have got an international conference, make sure they are tacking on these really great opportunities so regional tourism can thrive.

**Kat THEOPHANOUS** (Northcote) (18:30): Along with my colleagues I rise to speak in support of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024, and I want to begin my remarks by commending the trust for its work over the years in steering a very important economic and cultural asset for the state of Victoria. In particular I acknowledge the leadership of the Honourable John Brumby, who was appointed chairperson of the trust in 2017 and who has brought an enormous level of skill and expertise and wisdom to the trust. I have had the opportunity to know the former Premier for many years across different intersects, including in his role as chancellor at La Trobe, and I know that his guidance has been key in elevating the standing of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) but also navigating the next exciting phase of the trust with the establishment of the Geelong Convention and Event Centre.

These two centres working together in collaboration will cement Victoria as a premier global destination for events and exhibitions, and that is what we are here to formalise in legislation. We are expanding the functions of the trust to meet the changing needs of Victoria's tourism and events industries, we are modernising its governance and operational provisions and we are of course changing the name of the act and the trust to the much more reflective Victorian Convention and Event Trust. I will not dwell on the semantics of an event versus an exhibition; it is clear to me that the role and scope of the two centres is better captured by the broader umbrella of 'event'. To me that makes sense.

What is more salient is the important role the trust has to play in our state's economy and in Victoria's presence nationally and on the world stage. As the body responsible for the development, promotion, management, operation and use of convention and exhibition facilities in Victoria, it provides a platform for our state to host a huge variety of events and showcase Victoria as a destination – and what a destination we are. Honestly, scarcely a week goes by in our great state of Victoria that we are not at the forefront of hosting enormously popular major events that bring excitement and prestige to our state. Whether it is the Australian Open, the AFL Grand Final, Taylor Swift, Always Live, the *Pharaoh* exhibition at the NGV, the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, White Night, Formula One, the Rip Curl Pro, the flower and garden show or the mighty Eighty-Six music Festival in Northcote, there is always something wonderful happening in Victoria. We are the major events capital for so many reasons, but not least because of the continued investment across successive Labor governments into unrivalled infrastructure, like the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre and the soon-to-be Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre.

Although I do not hail from Geelong, and there are others upon our government benches who will speak more directly to and more sensitively to the impact the Geelong centre will have on their communities, as a Victorian I am immensely proud that we are creating this huge, new event space to bring conferences, entertainment and live music to Geelong. The stats on this centre are actually quite remarkable. There will be a 1000-seat venue, two large exhibition spaces, meeting rooms, conference facilities and flexible event spaces. There will be retail for food and beverage, a large public plaza

facing the waterfront, a hotel – it is going to be outstanding. Not only that, but the construction is supporting 1450 jobs, and once it is opened it will include 3700 square metres of event space and support another 700 jobs ongoingly.

We know from the success of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre how these sorts of investments in infrastructure have the potential to draw large-scale business events and the flow-on benefits that those events have for visitation, knowledge sharing, industry connections, profile raising and ultimately for our economy. In the year ending March 2024 Victoria's visitor economy hit a record high of \$39.3 billion, reaching the government's 2024 tourism target more than a year ahead of schedule.

Business events play a big role in this. Our last budget invested again in the Business Events Fund to secure that pipeline of international business events which generate such valuable economic returns. Some of the events supported by the fund in recent years were the Global Entrepreneurship Congress 2023, the International Congress of Genetics 2023 and the World Indigenous Cancer Conference 2024. These sorts of events put Melbourne and Victoria on the world stage and allow us to demonstrate our strengths across an enormous range of sectors, from science and medtech to public policy, agriculture and innovation. They fill hotels. They get people into our restaurants and bars and shops. They support Victorian jobs and elevate our profile.

But it is not just international events. Just a few months back I was able to attend the MCEC for the first Victorian Pelvic Pain Symposium, hosted by the Victorian Department of Health and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. It was a groundbreaking event, focused on understanding, treating and supporting women with pelvic pain. For a whole day it brought together experts and advocates in the field to share knowledge and drive better models of care for a very wide range of conditions – conditions that impact women's daily lives. The venue and the spaces allowed for keynotes, breakout rooms, TED Talk-style presentations and a closing plenary, which I was able to contribute to as a speaker. The utter professionalism of the setting gave the event that added gravitas, and it set the stage for collaboration. Just like in the many, many schools that the Labor government has upgraded, the spaces meant that it was conducive to learning and to knowledge sharing. To have a government-owned asset like this is quite remarkable, and we are immensely fortunate to have it.

Just to cover off on some of the technicalities of the bill, I want to reiterate that we are contemporising the governance arrangements for the trust to bring it into line with comparable statutory authorities. Governments have a responsibility to modernise and strengthen corporate governance in entities like this to improve accountability and afford people engaging with the facilities or services of the trust better protections but also to bring the professional and ethical duties of the members of the trust into line with contemporary practices and community expectations. To that end, the bill will increase the maximum number of members of the trust from seven to nine part-time members to reflect the additional responsibilities of the trust as the operator of the Geelong centre. It will enable the minister to appoint a deputy chairperson or an acting chairperson to ensure better coverage should the chair be absent or unable to perform duties. It will expand the scope of conduct that may allow a member to be removed or suspended, including if the member fails to disclose a conflict of interest, and other sorts of provisions. The bill will also amend the automatic member vacancy provisions to reflect more appropriate terminology.

I think it is clear from what everyone has said already that we all value the role that events play in our economy and in our cultural life. Just last sitting week we had our wonderful Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events stand up and remind us about the packed winter calendar that we have. I think we all take a fair amount of pride in that and in being such an outstanding and sought-after destination for so many iconic events. Yet it is no secret that the events sector did take an enormous blow during the pandemic years and is still in the process of recovery. As the member for Northcote I did see this firsthand in the inner north, where large-scale music venues and event halls felt the real brunt of the public health measures. Northcote lives and breathes music. It is a major hub for culture and artistry, with more live music venues along High Street than I think any other street in the country. Every week

we are buzzing with local, national and international acts, drawing crowds to our local businesses and generating jobs in the creative industries and other industries.

We are a destination precinct, and we know and understand the cascading impacts that can occur when these vital industries are put under pressure but also the immense benefits that can be imparted when they are supported to thrive. That is why, coming out of the pandemic, one of my immediate priorities was kickstarting our events again, so last October we hosted the Eighty-Six music festival, drawing an audience of over 29,000 and activating more than 200 businesses. These events demonstrate why supporting this bill and the events sector is so important. I commend the bill to the house.

**Annabelle CLEELAND** (Euroa) (18:40): I rise today to speak on the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024, a bill that I have no opposition to. This piece of proposed legislation is largely uncontroversial and is in place to address and reflect changes to the operations and scope of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust. This includes adding the new nearly \$500 million convention centre in Geelong under the trust administration, as we have heard. This centre is expected to open in 2026. While Jeff's Shed was able to home several events in the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, it is a shame the Geelong centre will not have the same chance when it opens.

But back to Jeff's Shed, I do fondly remember attending Equitana Melbourne when it was held at Jeff's Shed, where I was fortunate enough to participate in the showjumping event as a young teenager. I can still recall riding my beautiful horse Grace as we practised on the lawn with Polly Woodside nearby, adding a touch of history to our practice arena.

**A member** interjected.

**Annabelle CLEELAND**: Absolutely. Walking my horse into the grand arena inside Jeff's Shed still gives me nostalgic butterflies, even when we visited the Melbourne convention centre when it was transformed for David Attenborough's BBC Earth experience recently.

**Jade Benham** interjected.

**Annabelle CLEELAND**: Because the member for Mildura, who can pipe down, is entertained by my interest in showjumping, she would be interested to know that the little girl from the country dazzled by the bright lights of the city was eliminated in the first round, but I still look back on that moment as one of the highlights of my showjumping career, even if I peaked as a 13-year-old.

When it comes to this legislation the main purpose of the bill is to amend the existing Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Act 1996, and this includes changing the name of the act and the trust established by the act from Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust to Victorian Convention and Event Trust, which is an excellent idea, and expanding the functions of the trust and modernising trust membership in governance arrangements. The other particularly noteworthy provision increases the number of trustees from seven to nine. There are also provisions throughout the bill which amend the legislation to remove powers from the Governor in Council and transfer those powers to the minister for convenience. The bill will also make minor housekeeping amendments to other acts that refer to the trust to ensure the language is up to date. Additionally there are further governance changes that are aimed at modernising the trust's structure.

In a more general sense the government also aims that this legislation is a response to the growing need of the tourism and events industry across Victoria. With the regional tourism industry continuing to grow there are several projects in towns across my electorate that deserve recognition. Just last week I had the pleasure of seeing the best of what our local equine industry has to offer at a stallion parade in Seymour, which I am sure the member for Mildura would like to hear. Locally based breeders including Yulong Stud, Swettenham Stud, Darley, Godolphin and Lovatsville opened their gates for hundreds of visitors from across the world, demonstrating why the Euroa region is regarded as a premier location in Australia's thoroughbred breeding and equine industry – well, in my eyes.

The impact this industry has on our local economy cannot be overstated, providing hundreds of jobs at studs, racing clubs and the equine hospital with a flow-on impact to the agronomists, farm suppliers, shed builders and many more associated industries. Tourism from our racing clubs also continues to be a major drawcard, with local events bringing huge crowds and getting people to our regional towns where they will stay in local accommodation, eat at our restaurants and drink at our pubs. This is not the only drawcard to my electorate, with several other major local events continuing to bring people from across the country. The Seymour Alternative Farming Expo is a premier agricultural event in our state, bringing businesses and customers alike into our towns for multiple days and has an epic whip cracking event. For car nuts we have the Euroa Show and Shine, which year on year has thousands join for the best when it comes to classic cars, bikes and other exciting events for the entire family. More recently we have seen Benalla turn into a cultural hub for regional Victoria too. Now home to a world-class gallery, Benalla also hosts a street art festival that includes many of the incredible murals on walls across town.

Making sure these events can attract as many people as possible is incredibly important for the economic future of our towns and local organisations; it is essential that they are supported by this government. We want to attract more people to visit regional Victoria, have them stay locally and increase the amount of money spent in our local communities. It will be great to see as many communities as possible benefit from more funding to ensure our regional towns continue to get the support that they deserve.

To summarise, this bill is little more than spring-cleaning legislation designed to tidy up obsolete or inefficient governance practices, change names and allow some modernisation. Stakeholders have been considered and local voices were included, particularly those in Geelong, to make sure the new centre is represented in decisions relating to the trust.

**Sarah CONNOLLY** (Laverton) (18:45): I most certainly will not be cutting my 10 minutes short when I get to talk – I know the member for Euroa needs to sit down and take some time, so nothing to you, member for Euroa – but I am really excited to stand and speak on the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024. It is a bit of a mouthful, isn't it. There have been some great contributions on this side of the house, and I think we are all pretty well acquainted with just how fabulous the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) is, with it being just over 2 kilometres away across the Yarra. We recognise the incredibly important, valuable role that it plays for our city here in Victoria, and not just for Victorians but indeed for other folks interstate that are visiting our wonderful city or indeed those who are lucky to be jetsetting into Melbourne.

Since the MCEC – I was going to say MCG; it just rolls off the tongue as a Victorian – was built and opened by the Victorian government in 1996 as the Melbourne Exhibition Centre, this building really has been at the forefront of culture and events here in Melbourne. We have had members across the chamber talk about some of those wonderful iconic cultural events that we hold here in Melbourne that really make us proud to be Victorian. It is something that our government has recognised and supported over the years, and during the Bracks government – another very proud westie – we invested over \$370 million to revamp the centre as the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. It was part of a major precinct redevelopment that took place in and around this part of Melbourne. In 2015 our government, the then Andrews now Allan Labor government, further supported the centre's growth, which was really important, with a really big expansion. It was \$205 million, that expansion, and it was completed in 2018.

The history and the impact of this centre is not limited to government investments alone. Over the last 10 years the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre has been the home of the Good Friday Appeal, something that I know Victorians feel very passionate about and that raises money for a very, very, very good charity indeed. It is something I know that everyone on all sides of this chamber supports.

In 2019 the centre's contribution to Victoria's economy exceeded \$1 billion. It is not just a cultural asset, it is an economic boon for our state. Now we are hoping to build upon this success with the Nyaal Banyul convention and exhibition centre, which is being built in none other than Geelong and is expected to open in 2026. I am lucky enough to sit next to the member for Geelong, who I know cannot wait for this centre to open, and the benefit that her community will be able to get from this centre will be immeasurable – as well as other Victorians who will be making their way down to Geelong to attend different things there.

**Juliana Addison** interjected.

**Sarah CONNOLLY:** I will not be saying go Cats, member for Wendouree, it will be go the Doggies. Nonetheless, given how successful the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre has been for nearly 30 years, it is no wonder that there is significant demand for another centre, which is what this new one that is going to be carved out in Geelong will cater for. As it stands, the project is supporting a total of – and I should look to the member for Geelong when I say this – 600 jobs in construction and will create a further 280 jobs after the centre opens. That is huge – absolutely massive. As it currently stands, the MCEC is governed by a board of trustees and headed up by former Premier the Honourable John Brumby.

We know that by and large this group of trustees do an absolutely fantastic job of managing the MCEC, and we want them to be able to do the same for the Nyaal Banyul. What we actually want is for these two centres to be able to work in collaboration, not in competition with each other, and that is what this bill absolutely focuses on.

To begin with, the bill will rename the current Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust to the Victorian Convention and Event Trust, which reflects their new responsibilities. This was a decision that our government made based on extensive stakeholder consultation, particularly with those in the Greater Geelong region who wish to work with the trust members to bring this project to regional Victoria. In addition to this, the bill will allow for the minister to expand, by determination, the powers and importantly the functions of the trust. This will allow them to meet the ever-changing needs of Victoria's events industry, because as this sector grows in our state – let us not forget that Victoria is the events capital of Australia – it is actually really important that the role of the convention and events trust in meeting this type of demand is flexible and adaptive. An example of where this might require additional functions would be the training of events staff – whether to manage Nyaal Banyul or elsewhere.

Another small but equally important change is that this bill is going to expand the number of members on the trust from seven to nine. This change, I think, is a no-brainer. We are expanding not only the responsibilities of this trust body but also its functions and powers, and it simply needs more people on the board of trustees to share these responsibilities. I also think it really does create a new opportunity for some new voices to be heard, especially and most importantly from regional Victoria, which this new venue is designed to cater for. As it stands there is only one member of the trust who actually lives in Geelong and has extensive local knowledge of the area. I know, being a member of Parliament here and representing Melbourne's inner, middle and outer west, it is really important to have extensive local knowledge. In talking about how there is only one member of the trust who lives in Geelong and has that knowledge, we are making these changes to make sure we bring more of that knowledge, like that particular member, to the table.

Further to this, the bill is going to allow for the appointment of a deputy chairperson and acting chairperson to allow for better coverage of the board's duties in the event that the chairperson is absent or otherwise preoccupied. Like I said, these are small changes, but they are important, because they are making sure that the board and the trust will actually be working in the practical reality where, if the chairperson is absent, it is still able to run, which is really important. Whether it is in relation to health or other commitments, the acting chairperson, the deputy chair, can step in. We know that currently the chairperson role is held by former Premier Brumby. In addition to this role he also serves



as chancellor of La Trobe Uni and as an honorary professor at the University of Melbourne. I will briefly say it is so wonderful to see former parliamentarians, especially former leaders in this place, who have a wealth of knowledge, go on to further their contribution to the public good. I know that many of my colleagues in this place have very fond memories of serving with him, but as we all know, members who sit on these trusts have competing duties. This is a small change, but what it will do is ensure that if those duties are competing at any given time, another member is able to seamlessly take the seat and fill in for them if needed.

In the last 45 seconds I have got, I will say that it will be absolutely amazing when this new centre in Geelong opens. I think I said earlier in my contribution it will be in 2026, a very important year. It will be a wonderful year to open a very important centre that really is about our further investment into not just Victoria and Melbourne but really regional Victoria. It is something that I know the member for Geelong has worked very hard on, and she is very excited to be with her colleagues down in that region to cut the ribbon in 2026 and celebrate another incredible investment by the Allan Labor government. I commend the bill to the house.

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (18:55): I rise to speak on the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust Amendment Bill 2024, a bill that will effectively put into the remit of the current trust's roles the Nyaal Banyul Geelong convention centre, which is slated to open in 2026. As it says in the second-reading speech, these convention centres actually are important for the tourism and events industries, which make an important contribution to Victoria's economy through direct spending, employment and investment. In the second-reading speech it is highlighted that that is something that these convention centres should complement. As the member for South-West Coast, which is obviously 2 hours west of Geelong, South-West Coast begins at Terang and then goes right through to the South Australian border, and we have so many festivals and events that this government needs to recognise as part of the remit for Victoria and should be supported. Can I begin by saying we are very excited to have Triple J coming to South-West Coast on the weekend of 14 to 15 September. They have certainly recognised that country towns do need to be supported. That event sold out within 24 hours, and we are very excited to have them come to Warrnambool.

But we have many tourist attractions, like Tower Hill, a place that has been at the heart of my family's Sunday afternoons since I was a little girl, where we always take international visitors because they are guaranteed to see a koala, an echidna, an emu, a kangaroo and often a snake. It is just a wonderful part of the world where you can really be guaranteed to entertain anyone. Certainly the international visitors love the Australian wildlife there. A lot of it closed – the Robin Boyd centre, which is architecturally renowned there. Having money invested into it is great, but we are really looking forward to hearing and I would like to hear from the government what its plans are to get that visitor centre back up and running. I would like to also see the weeds being managed much better. The Friends of Tower Hill do an extraordinary job out there on weekends once a month to pull weeds and spray, but they need more support. The government needs to recognise that it has a responsibility to these areas to keep them up to a standard where they remain a pleasure to visit and are not overrun by weeds like we often see at Tower Hill.

We have also got the beautiful coastline in South-West Coast. It is a whale nursery and migratory pathway, where especially at this time of year, in the winter months, we see the whales coming and giving birth. It is an attraction where many people come from right across Victoria and South Australia to see those whales. Let us keep those areas pristine. They are not places for offshore wind farms. There are plenty of places for them, but certainly not in a whale migration pathway, which has not been seen anywhere else in the world. We are not able to know what the consequences will be on those whales and what the future of bringing more whales to the area, which we have been seeing, since it has been a pristine area and protected.

We also have the iconic Melbourne-to-Warrnambool bike race, which has got a long history and recently brought women into the competition as well. Every year they go to the government, cap in hand, to be able to run these events, because these events are expensive to run, with all the regulations

that keep being put on these volunteer organisations. Every year I see many people just go and stand on the corners to make sure the route is safe and people are kept away from the bikes – stopping cars, stopping pedestrians and making sure it is safe. We need to support those volunteers, make sure they can see a future for iconic races and events like Melbourne to Warrnambool and make sure that the government is giving a clear message to that particular iconic event that the women's event will be a part of the future by giving them the security of funding.

We also have many festivals, like in October we are going to see the spring music festival at Port Fairy. That brings people from all over the place. It is a wonderful festival. There are those sorts of events which bring varied music like the spring music festival does with the types of music that come with that. It is very different to the Port Fairy Folk Festival, which has been going for decades now, and again, many, many volunteers –

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

### *Adjournment*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

### **Manningham justices of the peace**

**Matthew GUY** (Bulleen) (19:00): (791) My adjournment matter tonight is to the Attorney-General, and it concerns the number of justices of the peace in the municipality of Manningham. At the moment there are 122 JPs in Manningham, and a recent survey found that only 11 of them were active. This presents a major problem for the 11 JPs who are active, because of course they locate themselves in the local police station and they are working long shifts.

**Anthony Carbines** interjected.

**Matthew GUY:** No, I can advise the minister that JP is not one of the names after this one. It will not be anything, so do not worry. I point out that the youngest JP in Manningham is aged 70. Numerous attempts by JPs to approach the Department of Justice and Community Safety to request another round of JP appointments have led to the response that the department will do surveys to see who is still active. They are not seeking to add new JPs to this number – they should, but they are not. What we get is a revolving door: that is, the same people stay, most are not doing anything and the same 11 or thereabouts are doing all the work.

There are a number of people who have applications in with the government and want to help. They want to be JPs, they want to get on the list and they are looking to participate and help out because they know that the problem is real. If another 10 were hired, or even two – I know the JPs I met recently would be happy with two. But if another 10 were added, this would allow two shifts per day, morning and afternoon, to be rostered at Doncaster police station, and that would allow the signing of documents to happen on a regular basis. I might add this cuts down a significant amount of time for police. The Minister for Police at the table should know this: the more JPs on the roster and the more work they are doing, it is taking away work that VicPol officers would have to do if those JPs were not there. So it makes sense to have a number on the books who are more active than what there is.

So my request to the Attorney-General and the department of justice tonight is very simple, and that is to add another 10 justices of the peace to the municipality of Manningham to give the hardworking JPs in the municipality of Manningham a break and to help relieve the stress that is being placed on the Doncaster police.

### **Women's health**

**Tim RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (19:02): (792) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to update my community on the next stages of the women's pain inquiry. We had a significant women's pain forum in the Mordialloc electorate to make

sure those that have been impacted by a range of different conditions, be they pain or other ailments, and have long been restricted and impacted through a gendered lens were platformed and given the opportunity to share their lived and living experiences and be part of the Women's Health in the South East report that will go forward as a submission, as well as their individual submissions. I want to give a big shout-out to Women's Health in the South East – to Kitty McMahon, to Zoe Francis and the team – who do an outstanding job. We were joined by the Premier and the Minister for Health, and it was one of the best, if not the best, of the events I have been involved in. We were able to platform that and have women and girls in our community share their experiences of the barriers in health care and community outcomes in allied health that are systematic and that we need to be aware of.

We have seen big reforms as this Andrews–Allan Labor government has gotten underway. We have seen gender-responsive budgeting, we have seen investments in women's health hubs, and I want to give a big shout-out to one of the best going around in this place, the Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Health Kat Theophanous, who is an outstanding parliamentary secretary and has worked tirelessly in this space.

This forum that we had allowed people to share their views and experiences, but it was not just in the Mordialloc electorate. We saw 12,000-plus Victorian women and girls come forward in this inquiry. I find that a wonderful testament to how important this inquiry is and the huge amount of work that needs to be done. Of those that have bravely shared their stories and fronted up with their experience, some have lived a life of chronic pain and impact and have shared and detailed that. I want to say as well: pain and impact mean different things to different people. We heard people share about mental health and wellbeing, trauma and impact as well. We heard of a range of different ailments, diseases and chronic illnesses that were denied or impacted as well, all the way through to what we hear from women and girls in Victoria around endometriosis. There is a huge spectrum here.

All those submissions have come forward – 12,000 Victorian women and girls have shared their experiences, so my question to the Minister for Health is: what comes next? What are the next steps in this really important inquiry? The work that has been done, the countless forums that members of Parliament have hosted in their electorates – what are the next stages in this really important work to support woman and girls in our community?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I remind all members to use correct titles. That is a couple of times today.

### Family violence

**Annabelle CLEELAND** (Euroa) (19:05): (793) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence. The action I seek is that victims of family violence are able to access priority housing under the current system without having to first distribute or sell assets to qualify. The system is making it near impossible for women fleeing family violence to access these services without first selling their house or losing assets through divorce or separation. In some cases these are women on disability pensions who are caring for their children who are also victims of family violence. Many of these women are living in unsafe circumstances with their children. While leaving the situation is the safest option, it has a high chance it will result in homelessness. The chronic limitations on affordable and social housing mean that victim-survivors of family violence are frequently forced to choose between staying in a violent relationship or becoming homeless. The lack of affordable housing in this state undermines our family violence systems to protect victim-survivors.

In 2016 the Victorian royal commission recognised that family violence was the number one cause of homelessness for women and children and subsequently made eight recommendations to improve victim-survivors' access to accommodation, including upgrading family violence refuge and crisis accommodation; increasing access to safe, at-home responses and private rental brokerage; and initiatives to fast-track victim-survivors into long-term housing and out-of-crisis accommodation. Instead, in the past decade the housing waitlist for women escaping family violence has increased 300 per cent, from eight months to more than 24 months, with no end in sight. That is two years of

living in cars, couch surfing or on the street as they escape an unimaginable situation, or two years remaining in an unsafe, violent situation.

Tara, a woman in my electorate, is a heartbreaking example of this. While being in an ongoing family violence situation which has included police visits, intervention orders against her ex-husband and regular contact with local services, Tara is stuck in a near-impossible situation. Despite ongoing family violence and regular contact with local services, Tara's house will be sold in two months, leaving her and her children homeless. Services have failed to provide her with safe housing options, and she is frightened, living in danger and angry about the lack of assistance by all services.

Serious changes must be made before more lives are lost to family violence. Support for social housing in regional areas is dangerously inadequate. Family violence remains the leading cause of homelessness in my electorate, with 348 women seeking Beyond Housing services last year. During Homelessness Week this month, over 2500 people from the Ovens–Murray and Goulburn region were on the Victorian Housing Register waitlist – half of them priority applicants. People often ask: why does she stay? But tonight, I ask the minister: where does she go?

### **Geelong transport infrastructure**

**Alison MARCHANT** (Bellarine) (19:08): (794) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. The action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on how the completion of the South Geelong to Waurin Ponds duplication rail project will benefit the electorate of the Bellarine. I was down there on Sunday. It was great to witness the trains doing their test runs and to celebrate these upgrades, which include additional car parking spaces, additional platforms, improved shelter, accessible pedestrian overpasses, two level crossing removals and a duplication of more than 8 kilometres of track between South Geelong and Waurin Ponds station. It is a fantastic project, with great support from both federal government and our state government. I know these upgrades will have that lasting effect for the Bellarine commuters – both those on the train and those who are driving, with the removal of the level crossings. I look forward to being able to update my electorate on just how impactful these upgrades will be for them, now and in years to come.

### **Croydon electorate housing**

**David HODGETT** (Croydon) (19:09): (795) My adjournment is for the Minister for Housing, and the action I seek is for the minister to work with the Commonwealth government, community housing providers and renter advocates with the aim of purchasing current national rental affordability scheme, NRAS, rental properties in Croydon to retain them as affordable or social housing. I have a high number of NRAS homes in my electorate of Croydon. My office has received several calls from stressed and anxious tenants who have received letters informing them that their 10-year lease under the NRAS will conclude in November. These tenants are some of the most vulnerable in our community, made up of mostly single mothers, domestic violence survivors and Indigenous residents.

The government has introduced several legislative changes that have had a detrimental impact on people owning additional properties in Victoria. People have endured massive increases in land tax, and additional costs have been imposed on landlords. As a result, with the 10-year lease under the national rental affordability scheme, the NRAS, concluding in November, some landlords are opting to sell their investment property and get out of the market in Victoria while others will shift to charging full market value rent. If these tenants could not afford to rent at market value 10 years ago, they certainly cannot afford it now. These tenants are facing homelessness.

We know there is currently a rental crisis in Victoria. We know there is a 15-year waiting list for social housing. We know this NRAS scheme is now ending. Therefore I implore the minister to follow the Queensland government's example and purchase these NRAS properties and retain them for affordable and social housing. Without intervention many of these homes will be lost – taken out of the market and unavailable for low-cost housing – and the housing crisis in Victoria will become worse. I appeal to the government to not waste this opportunity and to work to find a way to purchase

these properties and keep them for affordable or social housing. Do not ignore these people in their time of need; do not force them into a situation of homelessness.

### **Courthouse Hotel, Footscray**

**Katie HALL** (Footscray) (19:11): (796) The action I seek is for the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation to refer the conduct of the Courthouse Hotel in Footscray to the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission. There are deep community concerns regarding the operations of this venue. The Black Rhino Group, owners of the Courthouse Hotel, are reportedly billionaires with the means to ensure the safe operation of their venues. Their website claims:

All of our venues have been established on three pillars: *Cold beer, good food and welcoming spaces*.

This contrasts with a description of the venue on Tripadvisor:

... described as a hell hole. Typical of what happens to a pub when the sole focus becomes pokies. Toilets were putrid dirty, staff completely unaware and the atmosphere was worse than a funeral.

Local businesses have complained to me that the venue is a hub for antisocial and allegedly illicit activity, which impacts residents and nearby businesses. My office is nearby and I walk past it every day. I have seen the police attend the venue; there does not appear to be any security. I have felt unsafe walking past from the behaviour of patrons coming out of the Courthouse Hotel. I have called 000 for ambulances for people overdosing metres from the front door. Our community holds valid safety concerns for this area of Nicholson Street in Footscray, which is home to many migrant and family owned small businesses who believe that their livelihoods are being consistently threatened by the Courthouse Hotel. One neighbouring business, who have been there for decades, have told me they have had enough – they are leaving. I have also had a constituent report to me that they were refused service of a beer unless they were playing the pokies. Victoria Police are often called to the Courthouse Hotel to address altercations. It is open from 6 am to 2 am, although I note that the government's reforms will soon force a change to this. If the owners will not clean up the Courthouse Hotel, the inspectors at the commission should.

### **Warrnambool public transport**

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (19:14): (797) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and the action I seek is to ensure passengers have access to appropriate toilet facilities on replacement coaches between Melbourne and Warrnambool. For seven years my community has been waiting for the promised VLocity trains to be delivered for the Warrnambool–Geelong rail line. We have been enduring replacement buses for several months while upgrades are underway. But this has been happening for a decade – every time there is a train fault, an issue with the track or an incident involving road traffic. This journey typically takes around 4 hours, a considerable length of time for passengers to be on a coach without access to a rest room. We are now told the upgrades are over, and we have seen testing of one VLocity train on the line. However, we are told it may not be so soon that we will have VLocity trains on every service. Therefore it is likely that we will still see breakdowns requiring replacement buses.

My constituents have been complaining about the lack of toilets on the replacement buses from Geelong to Warrnambool. The department reassured my office that passengers would always have access to bathroom services on board for long journeys such as this, but after receiving many complaints that this was not the case and again approaching the minister, I received communication from the minister last week admitting that 30 per cent of the bus fleet would not have a toilet. The minister even suggested that passengers should approach the bus driver to request a stop when needed. I have also been made aware of instances where it has been suggested to passengers by the bus driver that they go behind a bush or they have been told by the bus driver that they will have to wait until the next scheduled stop. Not only do passengers feel uncomfortable asking the driver to pull over because they do not want to be an inconvenience to other travellers but it is also absurd and totally unacceptable in the 21st century to tell passengers to find a bush to squat behind. It is essential that all passengers,

regardless of health and mobility, can travel with dignity and comfort. The current arrangement does not provide that. Common sense would suggest that if a passenger would require a restroom when on board a train for such a long time, the same should surely apply when travelling on a replacement bus for the same journey.

We look forward to the seven-year promise of VLocity trains finally being delivered, but until we see that come to fruition it is unacceptable that replacement buses do not have bathroom access. The minister must ensure that those travelling between Warrnambool and Melbourne are afforded the same dignity that other commuters are afforded. For effectively one in three coaches in service to not have appropriate facilities in this day and age is simply not good enough.

### **St Andrew's Primary School, Clayton South**

**Meng Heang TAK** (Clarinda) (19:16): (798) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in visiting St Andrew's Primary School in Clayton South. I was delighted to announce late last month that St Andrew's Primary School is one of the 67 projects at 65 Catholic schools across Victoria which will share in more than \$243 million to expand and modernise existing facilities or build new schools. This amazing school will receive \$1.625 million for the refurbishment of the administration and library spaces and the construction of a new entry to the school that will be fully accessible. The work includes professional spaces for teachers, students and support staff and external site work. This is a huge win for our local community, for acting principal Nicole Black and former principal Paul Wakeling, now retired; both have been fantastic advocates for the school community.

St Andrew's and other non-government schools are an important part of Clarinda's education landscape and Victoria's education system, with more than one-third of Victorian students studying at a Catholic or independent school. I am very proud of this result and proud to be part of an Allan Labor government who is ensuring that every Victorian student can learn in the best facilities, with dozens of local low-fee Catholic schools to receive funding to upgrade classrooms and build new facilities, including in Clarinda. St Andrew's is a fantastic and popular local school, and this project will mean that its teachers have the best facilities to give the students the best education. I thank the minister, and I look forward to his response.

### **Donvale Montessori**

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (19:18): (799) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to prioritise grant funding for Donvale Montessori kinder, which is at risk of closing due to a funding shortfall. The Donvale Montessori early education centre is a respected, not-for-profit, Montessori-accredited early learning centre in our community, serving over 100 families. Despite its outstanding reputation and adherence to the Montessori quality assurance program, the centre is facing severe financial challenges and requires an immediate \$50,000 funding injection to avoid closure.

As one of only four Montessori-accredited centres in Victoria, Donvale Montessori is recognised for its commitment to quality education. The closure of this institution would displace many families and severely impact the broader Montessori community. It would also affect Mitcham Primary School, which relies on Donvale Montessori graduates for its own Montessori programs, as students must have attended an accredited early education centre in order to qualify for the subsequent cycles of the Montessori program that are taken at a primary level. Already many parents have been disappointed because of the introduction of new Montessori-like programs that unfortunately do not qualify them to proceed to Mitcham Primary Montessori and have had to change their plans and send their kids to mainstream schools against their original intention. The closure of Donvale Montessori as a local accredited option will thus have flow-on effects beyond early learning for those who desire to educate their children in the Montessori way.

Donvale Montessori is putting in a submission for a Building Blocks kinder grant, and I urge the minister to prioritise this great centre in the administration of the grant. I hope the government will act to ensure that essential, community-driven institutions like Donvale Montessori receive the support that they desperately need and that it supports local families in my electorate.

### Kororoit electorate schools

**Luba GRIGOROVITCH** (Kororoit) (19:20): (800) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the investments the Victorian Labor government have been making to deliver the Education State across my electorate of Kororoit, including at Albanvale Primary School. I am proud to be part of a government that has spent a decade building the Education State, because every child, no matter where they live, deserves an excellent education.

The announcement of the school saving bonus in the recent state budget has been welcomed by many families in my electorate of Kororoit. This has meant families are no longer having to choose between putting food on their table or paying for school activities and uniforms. This much-needed assistance is in addition to our government's other supports for families doing it tough, around camps, sports, excursions and uniforms. We are expanding the school breakfast clubs program to include all government schools. This will continue to address the impact that disadvantage can have on education outcomes, because we know that when children are hungry it affects their ability to concentrate, self-regulate and of course learn. Since the program was established in 2016, it has delivered more than 40 million healthy and nutritious meals to students across the state, including those at Albanvale Primary School.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting Albanvale Primary School, where I attended the Litfest event for 2024 as part of Book Week last Thursday. It was a very successful morning, with hundreds of parents coming together with their children to celebrate and share their love of reading. The event was made even better thanks to the school's breakfast club program, which provided a hearty breakfast for the kids. Parents also got to enjoy a free coffee, creating a warm and friendly atmosphere that brought everyone together. At the end of the literacy morning, there was a spelling bee, and what a fabulous way to get young children to learn how to spell, read and write even better. I want to thank principal Mr Michael Uzunovski and all of the staff involved in putting on this wonderful event that truly brought the entire school community together. During my visit I had the opportunity to engage in one-on-one conversations with several parents, all of whom expressed their deep gratitude for the breakfast club program. They highlighted how instrumental it has been in ensuring their children start their day with a nutritious meal.

We are seeing rapid growth out in the west, and I will take this opportunity to remind the house that Kororoit is home to the fastest growing LGA in Australia. As more families are choosing to live in Kororoit, we are getting on with building more schools, and I will highlight just how many schools this government has invested in. We have built Burnside Primary School in 2019, Aintree Primary School in 2021 and Yarrabing Secondary School and Dharra School, which were opened on day one of term 1 this year, and we are not stopping there. We have acquired land for Tarneit Plains primary school in Mount Atkinson, and in the 2024–25 budget we announced the funding to build this school by 2026.

I was recently invited by the youth in my electorate of Kororoit to speak to the senior students of Caroline Chisolm Catholic College. I got to talk to classes in economics, legal studies – *(Time expired)*

### Responses

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (19:23): The honourable member for Bulleen raised a matter for the Attorney-General regarding justices of the peace in Manningham and a desire to see at least 10 additional JPs appointed in these communities to provide support and reduce the stress and work burden on the existing JPs in

his local government area of Manningham. I will be sure to pass that on to the Attorney. The member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the Minister for Health, seeking an update on the next steps for the women's pain inquiry. The member for Euroa raised a matter for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence in relation to victim access to priority housing without having to sell assets to qualify, and I will be sure to pass that on. The member for Bellarine raised a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure regarding actions on an update to see what the latest news is with regard to the completion of that investment in the duplication between South Geelong and Waurin Ponds and how those benefits will play out in the Bellarine across her electorate.

The honourable member for Croydon raised a matter for the Minister for Housing, seeking greater work with the Commonwealth, community housing providers and rental associations with the national rental affordability scheme properties for affordable and social housing in his electorate for those in need. The member for Footscray raised a matter for the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation in relation to the conduct of the Courthouse Hotel and serious concerns about antisocial behaviour and other regulatory matters. I look forward to joining the member for Footscray in her electorate with Victoria Police members next week. I look forward to looking further into some of the matters that relate to liquor licensing and the engagement police have with the Courthouse Hotel beyond just the concerns that have been raised with the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the Minister for Public and Active Transport, seeking support for appropriate amenities to be provided, particularly around toilet facilities, for those who endure the 4-hour coach trip between Warnambool and Melbourne, particularly during rail line works, and making sure there are appropriate facilities for commuters.

The member for Clarinda raised a matter for the Minister for Education, who is going to be quite busy following up a number of adjournment items, seeking a visit to St Andrew's Primary School in Clayton South. He secured funding for his electorate and for St Andrew's Primary School in relation to the \$243 million contributions that the government is making towards Catholic schools and capital works programs. St Andrew's Primary School will be winners there. The member for Warrandyte raised a matter for the Minister for Education with regard to Montessori kindergarten funding and making that a priority in her electorate. The member for Kororoit raised a matter for the Minister for Education, seeking an update on investments in the Education State here in Victoria, particularly around Albanvale Primary School. I will be sure to pass on all those matters to the responsible ministers.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The house stands adjourned until tomorrow morning.

**House adjourned 7:27 pm.**