



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

60th Parliament

Wednesday 18 October 2023

Members of the Legislative Council

60th Parliament

President

Shaun Leane

Deputy President

Wendy Lovell

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Jaclyn Symes

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Lizzie Blandthorn

Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council

Georgie Crozier

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council

Evan Mulholland (from 31 August 2023)

Matthew Bach (to 31 August 2023)

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Bach, Matthew	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib	Luu, Trung	Western Metropolitan	Lib
Batchelor, Ryan	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Mansfield, Sarah	Western Victoria	Greens
Bath, Melina	Eastern Victoria	Nat	McArthur, Bev	Western Victoria	Lib
Berger, John	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	McCracken, Joe	Western Victoria	Lib
Blandthorn, Lizzie	Western Metropolitan	ALP	McGowan, Nick	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib
Bourman, Jeff	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	McIntosh, Tom	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Broad, Gaëlle	Northern Victoria	Nat	Mulholland, Evan	Northern Metropolitan	Lib
Copsey, Katherine	Southern Metropolitan	Greens	Payne, Rachel	South-Eastern Metropolitan	LCV
Crozier, Georgie	Southern Metropolitan	Lib	Puglielli, Aiv	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Davis, David	Southern Metropolitan	Lib	Purcell, Georgie	Northern Victoria	AJP
Deeming, Moira ¹	Western Metropolitan	IndLib	Ratnam, Samantha	Northern Metropolitan	Greens
Erdogan, Enver	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Shing, Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Ermacora, Jacinta	Western Victoria	ALP	Somyurek, Adem	Northern Metropolitan	DLP
Ettershank, David	Western Metropolitan	LCV	Stitt, Ingrid	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Galea, Michael	South-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Symes, Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Heath, Renee	Eastern Victoria	Lib	Tarlamis, Lee	South-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hermans, Ann-Marie	South-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib	Terpstra, Sonja	North-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Leane, Shaun	North-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Gayle	Western Victoria	ALP
Limbrick, David ²	South-Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Tyrrell, Rikkie-Lee	Northern Victoria	PHON
Lovell, Wendy	Northern Victoria	Lib	Watt, Sheena	Northern Metropolitan	ALP

¹ Lib until 27 March 2023

² LDP until 26 July 2023

Party abbreviations

AJP – Animal Justice Party; ALP – Australian Labor Party; DLP – Democratic Labour Party;

Greens – Australian Greens; IndLib – Independent Liberal; LCV – Legalise Cannabis Victoria;

LDP – Liberal Democratic Party; Lib – Liberal Party of Australia; LP – Libertarian Party;

Nat – National Party of Australia; PHON – Pauline Hanson's One Nation; SFFP – Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party

CONTENTS

PAPERS	
Papers	3317
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
Wyndham early parenting centre	3317
Pink Elephants Support Network	3317
Otways fauna protection	3318
Middle East conflict	3318
Shirley McKerrow	3318
Kevin Tolhurst	3319
Voice to Parliament	3319
Berwick District Woodworkers Club	3319
Medicinal cannabis	3319
Ross Reserve, Noble Park	3320
Sprite	3320
Workplace safety	3320
Sprite	3321
<i>Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy</i>	3321
Sprite	3321
MOTIONS	
Family violence animal welfare	3321
COMMITTEES	
Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid	3338
Premier	3338
MEMBERS	
Attorney-General	3346
Absence	3346
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS	
Pharmacotherapy services	3346
Commonwealth Games	3347
Ministers statements: early childhood education	3348
Commonwealth Games	3349
Water policy	3350
Ministers statements: Gabrielle Simmons ACM	3351
Water policy	3352
Water policy	3353
Ministers statements: LGBTIQ+ equality	3354
Housing	3354
Ministers statements: age of criminal responsibility	3356
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS	
Southern Metropolitan Region	3357
Western Victoria Region	3357
South-Eastern Metropolitan Region	3357
Southern Metropolitan Region	3357
Northern Victoria Region	3358
Southern Metropolitan Region	3358
South-Eastern Metropolitan Region	3358
South-Eastern Metropolitan Region	3358
Eastern Victoria Region	3359
North-Eastern Metropolitan Region	3359
Northern Metropolitan Region	3359
COMMITTEES	
Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid	3359
Premier	3359
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Notices of motion	3370
COMMITTEES	
Legal and Social Issues Committee	3370
Reference	3370
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Sessional orders	3389
STATEMENTS ON TABLED PAPERS AND PETITIONS	

Road safety camera commissioner	3394
Report 2021–22	3394
Department of the Legislative Council.....	3396
Overdue government responses to standing committee reports	3396
Select Committee on Victoria’s Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements	3396
Inquiry into Victoria’s Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements.....	3396
Department of Treasury and Finance	3398
Budget papers 2023–24	3398
Department of Treasury and Finance	3399
Budget papers 2023–24	3399
Victorian Auditor-General’s Office.....	3400
Eloque: the Joint Venture between DoT and Xerox	3400
ADJOURNMENT	
Housing affordability	3401
Shepparton sports and events centre.....	3402
Sunshine super-hub	3402
Hanukkah	3403
Timber industry	3403
Cost of living.....	3404
Wellsprings for Women.....	3405
Duck hunting.....	3405
Duck hunting.....	3406
Wire rope barriers.....	3407
Bus route 903	3407
Juvenile arthritis.....	3408
LGBTIQ+ equality	3408
Midland Highway.....	3409
Purple Pinky for Polio	3410
Responses	3410

Wednesday 18 October 2023

The PRESIDENT (Shaun Leane) took the chair at 9:33 am, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

*Papers***Papers****Tabled by Clerk:**

Auditor-General – Eloque: the Joint Venture Between DoT and Xerox, October 2023 (*Ordered to be published*).

Planning and Environment Act 1987 – Notice of approval of the Victoria Planning Provisions – Amendment VC241.

*Members statements***Wyndham early parenting centre**

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (09:35): I rise to update the house on my visit to the new multimillion-dollar Wyndham early parenting centre in my electorate of Western Metropolitan last week. The centre, set to open this month, is the first of 12 new and upgraded early parenting centres we are delivering across metropolitan and regional Victoria thanks to this government's \$148 million investment to expand and upgrade Victoria's early parenting service network so that new mums and dads will get the specialised support that they need to care for their new babies close to home.

The purpose-built centre includes kitchen and dining areas, playrooms and outdoor play areas, and it is delivered in partnership with the Tweddle Child & Family Health Service. It is designed to feel like a home away from home and support families in the west with children up to four years of age, giving them the advice and care that they need, including support with sleep and settling, feeding and extra care for babies and toddlers with additional needs. The new centre also features 10 residential family units and four day-stay places, providing both short-term and longer residential stay programs to improve the health, wellbeing and developmental outcomes of children.

The birth of a new child is one of the most precious moments for any parent, but for many it can also be a stressful and difficult time. The challenges associated with parenting in the early years of a child's life can affect families very differently. That is why this government is continuing its investment in early parenting centres, and I am proud that my constituents will be able to experience firsthand the benefits that our investments are providing for our communities.

Pink Elephants Support Network

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (09:37): This month is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. It was the Liberals and Nationals motion led by Margaret Fitzherbert in 2018 that recognised 15 October as International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day on Victoria's official calendar. In Victoria more than 18,500 pregnancies end in miscarriage every year; however, many losses are unreported. Families need support through this heartbreaking experience, and Pink Elephants is an organisation that encourages open and honest dialogue where people feel safe to share their personal experiences. We can all play our part in breaking down the stigma associated with pregnancy loss.

Approximately one in four pregnancies end in miscarriage. My wife and I are one of those one in four that have gone through this immense loss. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about that little life that was part of our family. The devastation, feeling of helplessness and sadness that this caused my family is not something I would wish on my worst enemies. I am glad there are organisations like Pink Elephants that are supporting women and families through their time of

sadness. I call on the government to commit to providing necessary funds as requested by the Pink Elephants Support Network in their application for women's health and wellbeing support grants and programs to assist families with this important work that supports so many women and families at their time of need.

Otways fauna protection

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (09:39): As we head into summer many Melburnians and people from across Victoria will flock down to the Great Ocean Road to spend time with family and enjoy our pristine beaches and the magnificent Otways, a part of Victoria I am proud to represent. The Otways is a rugged landscape that provides shelter and habitat for species that are struggling elsewhere. It is home to threatened species such as the southern brown bandicoot, long-nosed potoroo, swamp antechinus and rufous bristlebird. This area was spared from the devastation of the Black Saturday bushfires but continues to face a range of threats from wildfire, inappropriate planned burning and invasive species, including cats, pigs, deer and foxes, not to mention climate change.

Pre COVID the Great Ocean Road contributed \$1.5 billion to the Victorian economy through tourism, yet only \$6 million was contributed by government to the Wild Otways program in 2020, which funded essential research and on-the-ground work to improve the protection and management of threatened species in the Otways. This year this meagre funding will come to an end, and the essential projects it supports will be left in limbo. If we truly value places like the Otways, we must fund the protection of ecosystems and the work of programs like Wild Otways, otherwise we will lose them forever.

Middle East conflict

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (09:40): A few weeks ago I attended an event a few hundred metres away with the new Minister for Multicultural Affairs Minister Stitt. It was a celebration of the Jewish festival of tabernacles, or Sukkot, which is a Torah-commanded holiday celebrated for seven days. It begins on the 15th day of the month of Tishri. It began on 29 September and ended on Friday 6 October. It was a beautiful and a quiet time, which is why it left me sick to the core that terrorists would use this holiday to hide their rampage. As this chamber noted yesterday, Hamas terrorists crossed into Israel and brutalised innocent women and children in Israel. Festivalgoers doing nothing but attending a concert in the desert were slaughtered in their hundreds. Women were kidnapped and taken back to the Gaza Strip, where unspeakable evils occurred.

Last Monday night I, along with my colleagues in this place and the other place, like the Deputy Premier, attended the Caulfield Shule. We joined in peace, in reflection, in sadness and in resolve that Israel would have our support, now and forever. I know many in my community are afraid, and I want them to know we are doing everything to keep them safe. Antisemitic behaviour in schools is taken seriously. That is why Victoria Police is increasing its visible presence around Jewish schools, places of worship and cultural institutions – to keep them safe. I commend their partnership with the community safety group.

Shirley McKerrow

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (09:41): I mark the sad passing of Mrs Shirley McKerrow OAM, a trailblazer, rural and regional champion and breaker of glass ceilings. From 1975 to 1976 she was junior vice-president of the National Party. From 1976 to 1980 she was the state president of the Victorian Nationals, the first woman to serve as a state president of any political party. From 1981 to 1987 she was the federal president of the Nationals, the first female to be elected to such a position in any major political party in Australia. In a full and wholesome life, Shirley had strong connections to her community through sport, social, childcare, health and cultural activities. Notably, she served on the Gisborne bush nursing hospital committee in its formative years. She is survived by Dianne, Lachlan, Ian and Sally. She has made amazing contributions both in her community and to our beloved party. Vale, Shirley McKerrow.

Kevin Tolhurst

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (09:42): I would also like to share with the house the sad passing of forest scientist Associate Professor Kevin Tolhurst on 5 October, doing what he loved so much: speaking about the importance of bushfire behaviour, prescribed burns, guidelines, ecological management of landscape, bushfire risk management and the ecological impacts of fire up at Mallacoota with a team of devoted people. Kevin's passing is a huge loss not only to his loved ones and to regional Victorians but to those who care deeply about our public forest estate and its natural inhabitants. Vale, Kevin Tolhurst.

Voice to Parliament

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL (Northern Victoria) (09:43): I use my members statement today to reflect on the past weekend's referendum. The Voice's failed campaign was vague on details, created societal divide and cost Australian taxpayers an estimated \$450 million. Alas, Australians cast their vote on Saturday the 14th and our Westminster democratic system fulfilled its purpose in allowing the people the power of choice in our constitution. Overall, with 79 per cent of the vote counted, 60.7 per cent or 8.39 million people voted no, a clear reflection of how out of touch our current federal government is with what Australians truly expect from them.

So where to from here? The Victorian Labor government should continue to focus on what all Victorians need from them, not with minority groups leading their agendas but focusing on our constituencies as a whole. Housing, roads, hospitals, food, water, energy and the economy all need the undivided attention and commitment of our government to ensure all Victorians have what they need to lead the best lives possible.

Berwick District Woodworkers Club

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (09:44): I was delighted to visit the Berwick woodworkers club to learn more about important community work that they undertake and how essential their craft is to their members. The Berwick woodworkers have a magnificent site within the property of the Old Cheese Factory, which is owned as Crown land and managed by the City of Casey. It is registered as a historical site by the City of Casey. The 30-acre site includes around 10 acres and a mix of buildings that date back to the 1860s and other contemporary buildings and gardens. The original buildings were historically used in the production of cheese from the milking of over 200 cows twice a day.

I met with some of the woodworkers about a plan to significantly increase and enhance this site with even more artistic participation. I also saw some of the 1000 incredible toys the members produced to donate to charitable organisations at Christmas, the high-quality machinery used to make the toys and the many other projects created by the 130 members. Some of those members attend the club almost every day. It is their participation in this most precise craft that fulfils their artistic passion and their need for socialisation and companionship and provides an opportunity to contribute their skills to help others in need. I look forward to our ongoing discussions.

Medicinal cannabis

David ETTERSHANK (Western Metropolitan) (09:45): It was disappointing to read in the media recently the nonsense spouted by Michael Vagg and Rachelle Buchbinder in relation to medicinal cannabis, a lawful prescription medication. For them to equate the uptake of medicinal cannabis with the opioid epidemic is disingenuous and an intentional departure from the truth. Opioids can and do kill people – 764 people to be exact in 2021. Cannabinoids do not – in 2021, zero deaths. No single person is fatally overdosing on medicinal cannabis. Indeed a 2020 study by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre confirms that no deaths have ever been identified as being caused by direct cannabis toxicity. We are seeing evidence of the efficacy of medicinal cannabis for the management of pain in multiple epidemiological studies. Thousands of people across our society have found relief

in taking medicinal cannabis when all other treatments have failed. To quote the eminent Professor Iain McGregor, director of the Lambert Initiative at the University of Sydney:

Sensory measures of pain may not change that much with cannabis. But what does seem to change is people's ability to get on with and enjoy their lives. And that's fantastically useful.

Speaking from direct experience, I agree. It is a fantastically useful medicine, and for that reason Legalise Cannabis Victoria will never stop advocating for greater access.

Ross Reserve, Noble Park

Lee TARLAMIS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (09:47): I had the honour of officially opening the new Ross Reserve sports pavilion and lighting upgrade on the weekend, along with City of Greater Dandenong acting mayor Cr Lana Formoso, councillors and resident teams. Ross Reserve is one of our most popular sporting hubs, and for clubs like Springvale City Soccer Club, Noble Park 'Bulls' Junior Football Club, Sandown Lions Football Club and EMC Sports Club this is where the magic happens and where memories are made. Noble Park is a vibrant and growing community, and facilities like these will make it possible to welcome even more people into sport and recreation.

These projects were made possible by a more than \$980,000 investment from the Victorian government's Local Sports Infrastructure Fund and local sports grants initiative. Projects like this are the result of teamwork, but I would like to acknowledge the City of Greater Dandenong for its financial contribution of more than \$10 million and the commitment to delivering these projects.

These facilities will ensure our clubs get more time on the oval and can offer more people an opportunity to get their boots on and join in the fun. This will be a game changer for the resident clubs and will mean that they can expand their programs and get more people of all genders and abilities involved and active. Excitingly these upgrades are just one of several projects that are transforming this reserve, and we still have the new synthetic soccer pitch to look forward to, which will be completed in the coming months. It is all part of our strong commitment to sport and recreation, gender equality and encouraging all Victorians to get out and get active. Ross Reserve is the beating heart of community sport and recreation in Noble Park, and I look forward to continuing to deliver even more vibrant, inviting and accessible spaces throughout Noble Park for everyone to enjoy and take pride in.

Sprite

Lee TARLAMIS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (09:48): On another matter, bring back Sprite.

Workplace safety

Tom McINTOSH (Eastern Victoria) (09:49): At 11:50 on Sunday the CFMEU organised workers from across the union movement to gather at the West Gate Bridge and remember the 35 workers that lost their lives 53 years ago when a 112-metre span of the West Gate Bridge collapsed into the water and the ground below. Eighteen people survived with significant injuries, and each year we have less and less of those workers with us. We must never forget the lessons learned from this terrible incident in our history, and we must remember workplace safety. Every week two to three workers die in the workplace around Australia, and many more have digits or limbs amputated. The impact this has on children, on families and on all of these workers – it may be a grandparent; it occurs across all age groups – means it is something we must always endeavour to ensure does not occur.

In my first speech I spoke about working on a construction site as a probably cocky young 19-year-old. I did not want to wear my hard hat on a site working at Bayswater at Bunnings, and the CFMEU shoppie Rocky chased me around and made sure I wore it. One day, moving a temp fence with a 20-tonne excavator pushing it, I stupidly leaned in. The two bars let go and smacked me across the hard hat. If I had not been wearing that hard hat, I would have been significantly injured. So we must all be ever vigilant to ensure that we are continuing the trend of reducing workplace incidents and always remember that no job is worth someone's life.

Sprite

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (09:50): I rise for my members statement today to talk about the importance of companion animals, and I know that companion animals are of incredible importance to many people in my region. I note this year the Victorian government also rolled out the Victorian pet census, which was about finding out who had what types of pets. We are finding out that there are many and a varied range of pets that people have as companion pets.

But I am disappointed to inform the house that due to a decision by the Department of Parliamentary Services, our little senior ambassador Sprite was banned from this building. It is absolutely shameful, and I am devastated to learn this, because I think – and I know the Treasurer was on his feet this morning at the doors talking about this – having dogs in the workplace makes us all kinder and gentler people. Goodness knows we need that here in Spring Street, don't we. So I am on team Sprite. I am a strong advocate for bringing Sprite back to the Parliament, so bring back Sprite and go team Sprite!

I would just like to say that Sprite is a gorgeous senior rescue doggy. He has been very well looked after by his foster mum, and of course many, many parliamentarians have paid a visit to Sprite and given him lots of pats and cuddles. I know we are allowed to have dogs in the annex, but it does not make any sense not to have Sprite, who is actually no trouble at all and just sleeps in his bed and loves cuddles, just here in the library. I hope all of you will get behind team Sprite and join with me as we campaign to bring Sprite back to Spring Street.

Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (09:52): In 2020 we released the *Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy*, and now Minister D'Ambrosio has confirmed an amendment to that strategy. I was really glad to be part of that work, which was announced last Friday and which sets a number of parameters around the way in which mines need to be rehabilitated, making sure that as we transform those sites – some of the biggest open-cut mines in Australia – we are doing so to a standard that means that they are safe, stable and sustainable. This is work that involves partnership across all levels of government, within industry and of course within our communities, and it is really important to make sure that as we do this, we are providing certainty around, for example, access to surface water. Confirming that the entitlements will not be diminished for holders of water within the existing system as a result of mine rehabilitation is really important, and I look forward to plans being developed and submitted to ensure that operators and licence-holders of mine operation frameworks are held to the standards that necessarily and appropriately apply to them.

Sprite

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (09:53): On another matter, I would never resile from saluting the importance of dogs. Dogs in our workplaces play the most phenomenal role. Even though I hate the politics of so many people here, I cannot help but find common ground with them when I am spending time with the silvery magical senior 14-year-old Sprite. I would love to see him return to the precinct.

The PRESIDENT: What is that old saying: if you are an MP and you want a friend, get a dog.

Motions**Family violence animal welfare**

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (09:54): I move:

That this house notes that:

- (1) companion animal abuse is a form of family and domestic violence (FDV);
- (2) studies show women with companion animals have reported threatened or deliberate animal abuse in up to 53 per cent of FDV situations;

- (3) concern for the welfare of companion animals is a significant contributor to women and children remaining in violent homes;
- (4) the property status of animals under the current legislation makes it easy for perpetrators to acquire and maintain ownership of pets for use in coercive control;
- (5) emerging research shows clear links between animal cruelty and the increased likelihood of violence against humans;
- (6) in 2020 the government supported a motion to better protect companion animals and victim-survivors in situations of FDV;

and calls on the government to investigate amending the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 to include a specific offence for cruelty to animals as a form of early intervention and to further investigate the link between violence towards animals and humans in order to make appropriate reforms.

As we have all heard here just this morning in everyone's wonderful contributions about Sprite, it is not news that we Victorians consider our companion animals to be family, evidenced by the many dogs in my own office and the many that walk the hallways in this place too. We simply cannot leave them at home for long periods of time, just as we would not with a human child. There is currently a movement for dogs to be allowed in pubs with the rest of our family and friends and, as I mentioned last week, an increase in pet-friendly hotels.

For a growing number of us, including me, choosing not to have human children is becoming more and more normalised, because we already have kids – they just happen to walk on four legs. In fact in my case I consider dogs, cats, equines, ovines and bovines all part of my family at home, and after being an MP for less than a year, I know too that this is true for many of my constituents. In turn they want to see them better protected. So when considering the RSPCA statistic that one in three women delay leaving family violence situations due to legitimate fear of harm to their companion animals, I am alarmed, and it is my hope today that we can change this. An Australian study has revealed over half of women in violent relationships reported their partner had threatened to hurt or deliberately kill a family pet. Perpetrators are exploiting companion animals as tools of manipulation and for coercion, often simultaneously to other methods of coercive control, including limiting access to finances and monitoring of phone calls.

We owe it to animals to do our best for them every single day, and that means responding rapidly when information about cruelty and violence surfaces, and it means reforming laws that are no longer strong or fit for purpose when research and evidence like this emerge. But this is not just about protecting pets today, it is about early intervention to protect people too. It is for the safety of animals and for the safety of women and children, and that is why we must act now.

While I commend the government for listening and for working towards family violence reforms, particularly since the royal commission in Victoria, this motion outlines the more complex work that must be done in this space. If we are serious about ending family violence in Victoria, we must understand what experts have called 'the link'. As the Animal Legal Defense Fund has stated:

People who hurt animals don't stop with animals. There is an established link between cruelty to animals and violence toward humans – regularly referred to as "The Link."

This link makes it critically important that cruelty toward animals be taken seriously by law enforcement, and by society at large.

This will result in better outcomes for women and animals – safer outcomes. The Victorian government has acknowledged the link in the past and in 2021, following calls from the Animal Justice Party, committed to \$1.3 million to protect companion animals from family violence when this house unanimously passed another motion on this very topic. While there has been investment in pet-friendly crisis accommodation and other upgrades since then, there still has not been legislative protection for pets put into our family violence act in this state. It means we have only acted to protect pets and people after violence has occurred, rather than acting to stop it at its source with a method of early intervention.

It is time today in this place for the Allan government to commit to changing that, just as New South Wales did years ago. It is crucial because research points unequivocally to the link between animal abuse and family violence. Animal cruelty occurs more frequently where family violence is also occurring, and we cannot deny that any further: 76 per cent of animal abusers also abuse a family member, 70 per cent of animal abusers have criminal records and more than 50 per cent of schoolyard shooters have histories of animal cruelty, according to many US studies. If the animals in our homes are not safe, then it is more than likely that neither are the people.

In 2021 the ABC published the story of Jennifer Howard, who, like many women experiencing family and domestic violence, was unable to leave because there were no housing options to take her dogs, leaving her stuck with a man who physically and mentally abused her. Eventually the situation became too dangerous and she escaped with her children but was forced to leave her dogs behind. Jennifer went on to establish the widely regarded not-for-profit organisation Safe Pets Safe Families, which provides emergency services for people and their pets fleeing FDV in South Australia. The tireless work of family violence prevention groups in Victoria includes Pets of the Homeless, Safe Steps and Lucy's Project, and it is astounding to see the work that they have done. It is unfortunate that situations like Jennifer's are not unique and that charities are born out of human and animal suffering that could have already been improved with a simple legislative change.

On Monday just past I posted my intention of introducing and debating this motion today on my social media. In the following hours I was flooded with messages from women wanting to share their own personal experience with family and domestic violence and how their defenceless companion animals were also abused and used against them in acts of coercive control. I would like to now tell two of those stories that have been shared with me by brave and resilient women – with their full consent – who, thankfully, made it out of their violent homes alive:

... when I was 18, I experienced my first encounter with domestic violence ... My boyfriend at the time became physically, emotionally, and sexually abusive, but I didn't initially recognize the signs. Our relationship progressed rapidly, and he convinced me to move to a different state with him for a job opportunity. Against my better judgment, we also acquired two 9-week-old kittens ... even though our rental didn't permit pets. Looking back, I understand that this was a tactic used by him to manipulate and control me ...

A few weeks later, I managed to escape from him, but I couldn't take the kittens with me as I fled for my life. He had –

already –

destroyed all my belongings ... He attempted to manipulate me into returning by saying that I'd be homeless because we had obtained the kittens without informing the real estate ... he sent self-harming messages to me and my new employer as a means to guilt-trip me for leaving him and it demonstrated that any efforts to collect my kittens would be futile. When I didn't respond, he continued to message me ... telling me that he had drowned the kittens.

A few days later, I ... returned to the property and found our kittens in the shed, without food or water, in the freezing winter cold. Fortunately, I was able to secure accommodation in a local women's shelter, as I had finally sought help from the police. At the time, the RSPCA provided crisis accommodation for my kittens. Even with this support, I –

still –

faced numerous challenges ...

And:

In my recent marriage, there was a history of domestic violence, and we had two dogs ... who meant a lot to both me and my young daughter. However, my husband was cruel and neglectful towards the dogs. He seemed to view them as an extension of his ego rather than as beloved pets ...

As I planned to leave due to ongoing abuse, I had to come to terms with the possibility of leaving the dogs behind if I sought shelter or a rental for myself and my child. When my husband found out I left, he threatening to dump the dogs, claiming he couldn't handle them on his own. I tried to arrange temporary housing for the

dogs while I looked for a pet-friendly rental, but he changed his stance and then denied me access to them. He used every negotiation as a tool to manipulate me into returning and instil fear and urgency in me.

I lived in constant fear that he would harm the dogs or himself (as he had in the past) in retaliation for my departure. On one occasion, he deliberately let the dogs loose, causing them to create issues on a neighbouring farm and attack livestock ... He threatened that debt collectors would come after me if I didn't pay the fine.

I want to thank these brave women for sharing these experiences with me for me to share with you all today, but I also must say that these experiences are not unique and highlight the urgent need for coercive control involving animals to be recognised and for assistance to help victims temporarily house their pets while escaping life-threatening situations.

If this motion is passed today, and I sincerely hope it is, Victoria will be only the second state after New South Wales to acknowledge the importance of the protection of animals for women's and children's safety. By comparison, more than two-thirds of US states have enacted legislation that includes provisions for pets in domestic violence protection orders. By protecting animals in situations of family violence, we remove one of the biggest barriers to escaping a violent home. This is early intervention. But there is still so much more work to be done. Early intervention is key in protecting people from family and domestic violence. It is therefore pertinent that animals are protected under the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 for better and safer outcomes for both women and animals. I hope that the government can commit to these increased protections for women, children and animals today. I look forward to support from colleagues across the political spectrum and the entire chamber to do not only what is right by animals, women and children but what is expected by the majority of our society, and I commend the motion to the house.

Tom McINTOSH (Eastern Victoria) (10:07): I rise to support the motion put by Ms Purcell. It is an incredibly important issue and one that picks up on something that I am incredibly proud of: what this government has done over the last seven to eight years in the area of family violence. I think it takes another important step on the path to ensuring that we are not only preventing but dealing with situations of family violence in as many possible ways as we can, because as we know, as we have just heard in Ms Purcell's contribution, there are so many ways that coercion and control can be perpetrated, and we must remove all of those. It is also to absolutely recognise that cruelty to animals in any form is not on.

In 2015 the government announced that there would be a royal commission into family violence, which commenced in 2016. For me it is one of the incredible pieces of work of the Andrews government: to lead the nation in an issue that is so systemic in effectively putting trauma into our communities, into homes, into families and is having such a negative impact on Victorians, Australians and indeed people worldwide. Family violence is just such a nasty, horrific thing, particularly when people feel trapped in a situation they cannot get out of. Coming back to that word 'trauma', whether it be a partner or the trauma that is building in children if it is a family situation, it is something I am so proud this government has led the nation on dealing with: the 227 recommendations that came from that royal commission and the work that was done, whether that be with our police and our family courts; setting up Orange Door, ensuring that victims have pathways; and to go back a bit, to first of all starting the conversation to ensure that victims have more capacity, as we just heard in the last contribution, to identify behaviours that are leading to family violence. When those behaviours are identified, victims are then able to reach out to support services and identify what is going on and where necessary make other arrangements. That is through the support services, whether that is getting into housing or getting help within the home to ensure that the behaviour stops – whatever it is within those 227 recommendations – and the \$3.4 billion investment to ensure that we are stopping family violence in its tracks.

I am a big believer in removing generational trauma to see the best of ourselves in the kids that grow into our adults so they can be productive, to reduce mental health issues. Again, I am so proud that we had the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. For kids who are living in family violence situations, it is a constant stress upon them. Something that I want to pick up out of this

motion today is that, for some of those kids, pets can be an absolute place of safety for them. Kids can absolutely depend on pets as a piece of continuity in their lives and continuity in childhood. Kids that, for example, go into foster care lose everything that surrounds them, things that we might take for granted – the bedroom surrounds, the smell of the home, the foods they normally like to eat – and of course another big one is if they have a pet, that is left behind. Likewise, in a family violence situation, whether it is the victim or the children in the family, that ability to take a pet out of that situation I think is really, really important and should not be overlooked.

It cannot be overstated how much Australians love pets. We have just heard contributions this morning around Sprite, on a bit more of a light-hearted note. But in absolute seriousness, what pets do for people, whether it is from a physical health perspective in getting out and walking them and this sort of thing or a mental health perspective through the benefits of getting physical, getting active, having set routines and then getting out and talking to other people – I mean, whether it is dog owners or various pet owners, when they are out and about with their groups or just out in parks, people meet, get together, talk and share. It is really an incredible thing, and you only have to look at pet ownership numbers that have come out of the pet census to see how much people love their pets. But the why behind that – why do they love their pets? Because it is that deep, deep emotional connection, and it is that deep emotional connection that we do not want to see manipulated. We do not want to see coercive behaviour around victims in these situations.

Just coming back to that point of identifying behaviours early, Ms Purcell raised the fact that people that are cruel to animals are more likely to show the same behaviour to humans and to engage in a family violence situation. If this is another way that we can prevent violence to animals, we can prevent this coercive behaviour – we can get in, identify and deal with the behaviours or stop the situation – then this is another great way of preventing and removing trauma, this trauma that we know is going to come from this situation. And of course, as we know, it can be so much worse than simply emotional trauma; it can lead in the worst of circumstances to death.

The Family Violence Protection Act 2008: we know that there has been so much work done on it through the royal commission to lead us to all of the recommendations that came out of the royal commission – the services that were put in around housing to ensure that victims have somewhere safe to go and the services around financial counselling, because again, coming back to coercive behaviours, financial coercion has been an incredibly, incredibly strong one. The funding allocation and the resources and expertise we have put into our financial counsellors have been an incredible resource to enable people to have (1) the strength but (2) simply the financial capacity to leave relationships that they should not be in.

Coming back to that next generation, that generational change, the relationship programs that have been in our schools to help to identify what is healthy and what is not healthy in a relationship and other laws that are being passed around ensuring safe and respectful relationships – these all lead to a point where relationships should be healthy and should be respectful and where we should not be seeing family violence in these situations.

Again, I would just like to support this motion to ensure the welfare of animals. As I said earlier, it is critically important that through this we see another way to identify and intervene early and for behaviours to be noted. Ms Purcell talked about the two examples of victims noticing behaviours through the behaviour towards pets and that coercive control, but we need to ensure that that can lead somewhere, so that a potential victim can have their story heard and can have actions taken so that they and their pets can safely be removed from the situation, ensuring that they do not become another statistic in a statistic that has been far too high across Victoria and Australia for too long.

Renee HEATH (Eastern Victoria) (10:17): I rise to speak on Ms Purcell's motion on companion animals and family violence. This is a very interesting topic, and the more that I read about it the more interested I became, but I saw the importance of it too. What stood out to me most was what Ms Purcell referred to as the link, which is a staggeringly strong connection between violence towards animals

and family and domestic violence. Overall, the number of family incidents recorded by Victorian police increased by 6 per cent, from 82,205 in 2019–20 to 93,440 in 2020–21. Large increases were seen in the number of reported incidents between former partners and where the victim was a child and the alleged perpetrator was a family member. Every year these numbers seem to increase, and unfortunately this is something where we have to be able to look out for the signs more and more so we can support family, friends and community members that could be looking to us for help. On average police attend a family violence incident every 6 minutes. Violent behaviour is not normal, but it is extremely common. And family violence should never be tolerated.

I was staggered as I began to look through the research – and there is an awful lot of it – to find that surveys show domestic violence survivors revealed that up to 89 per cent of the perpetrators threatened, harmed or killed animals first – 89 per cent. That to me is just amazing and something that cannot be overlooked. The animal welfare report reports that animal abuse frequently occurs in the same households as family violence such as child abuse, elder abuse and sibling violence.

What fascinated me was an article called ‘Animal cruelty, pet abuse and violence: the missed dangerous connection’ by Scott Johnson, who is a psychologist from the USA. He said:

The mistreatment and abuse of animals is a significant indicator of violence towards humans, up to and including intimate partner abuse, sexual assault, rape, murder.

It is quite serious. The literature supports that animal cruelty is one of the earliest markers for future acts of both violent and non-violent criminal behaviours. It is quite staggering.

The second thing I want to talk about – and I got some information from the RSPCA on this one – is the effects that it has on children. It says:

In some households affected by domestic violence where animal abuse also occurs, not only does this lead to animal suffering but can also impact significantly on family members, particularly children, who –

are sometimes –

... forced to witness and/or participate in acts of animal cruelty. This can have a profound effect on children and –

leads to a continuing –

... cycle of animal abuse.

...

Children in particular, often rely on their pet to provide stability, security and companionship.

The third thing that I want to speak to is the spin-off effects that this can have on children growing up, who can become then violent offenders. Because domestic abuse is directed towards powerless animals, child abuse often goes hand in hand with it. Parents who neglect an animal’s need and proper care often abuse their own children and animals alike. Children who abuse animals might be repeating lessons that they have learned at home. Abusing children might have learned that from their parents by witnessing it, and it could lead to more frustration and anxiety and more violence.

It can lead to some very serious spin-off effects. Number four: research from the 1980s to the present has demonstrated that cruelty towards animals is a hallmark or signature indicator for future acts of violence, including rape, child molestation, domestic abuse, school shootings and other forms of violence. If somebody can be abusive or cruel to animals, it makes sense that they could often use the same aggressive behaviour towards people. That is with children. With adults it is equally serious. Those who engage in animal cruelty are three times more likely to commit crimes, including murder, rape, robbery, assault, harassment and threats and other abuses.

This is an extremely serious thing that we have really got a look at, because cruelty to animals in children is a huge indicator that they seriously need help, and often professional help. Cruelty to animals is often first reported when children are four to six years old. Unfortunately, parents often

under-report this abusive behaviour towards animals because they do not understand what is going on, and children who demonstrate cruelty to animals often show uncaring and unemotional traits. This is often a sign that they are witnessing abuse or involved in being abused themselves. If they are seeing it done to animals, they might be seeing it done to other family members. What unfortunately is shown in the research is there is such a strong link between them first abusing animals and then going on and abusing maybe other schoolchildren, family or friends. Then as they grow older they can become domestic abuse perpetrators. It is extremely serious.

People can use animal abuse as a way to psychologically abuse children. This is one of the things that I found most disturbing. Domestic abusers and child abusers also engage in animal cruelty as a means to control and further intimidate their victims. Harming the family pet is an effective way to instil fear and secrecy in victims, and even killing the pet effectively teaches the victim that they could just as easily be killed or seriously hurt. That is extremely messed up. That is psychologically abusive and something that children may never recover from.

Children experience trauma and an incredible sense of helplessness when they see this, and this is not a good start for the next generation. Children who harm animals may be victims of sexual abuse. This is something that needs to be taken seriously, and those children need to be referred for help. Children who were sexually abused are more likely to be cruel to animals. That is a scientific well-researched fact, and I just find that absolutely staggering. So there are some very interesting facts about what Ms Purcell calls ‘the link’.

I have got a minute and a half left, so I just want to close by talking about the benefits of companion pets. Companion pets – the research shows that they can reduce stress, they can reduce feelings of loneliness and depression and they can facilitate social connection. My sister about 10 years ago was seriously sick. It was an extremely tough time in our lives – not just for her, but mostly of course for her. But as a sister sitting back, not knowing what to do and being helpless over this situation, I finally decided to buy her the most beautiful British shorthair kitten named Chicago. We were not really cat people at all before this; in fact I am wildly allergic. But that cat now is about 15 years old – oh, my gosh, it must have been about 15 years ago that she was sick – and is the most pampered member of our family. It is unbelievable. We have so much loyalty towards Chicago because of the way he was able to really help in my sister’s healing process. So thank you, Ms Purcell, for bringing this up, and a shout-out to Chicago, our family cat.

Aiv PUGLIELLI (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (10:27): I welcome the debate on this issue, and I commend Ms Purcell for bringing it to this chamber. I will note from the outset that the Greens will be supporting this motion, which calls on the government to further investigate the links between animal abuse and family violence. There are a number of reasons for our support.

First, the Greens policy platform informs our response to this motion. It has been our policy for decades that animals must be recognised as sentient beings that deserve our care and our respect. Animals have intrinsic value separate from the needs of humans, and our policy and legal frameworks should support that. Our policy outlines that humans have a duty of care to minimise physical and psychological suffering of animals resulting from human activity and that strong animal welfare standards and laws are necessary. I believe that this motion speaks to all of these principles.

Second, there is a clear evidence base in reputable published literature that violence and cruelty against animals are widely recognised as both a risk factor for and a potential consequence of family violence. These studies are published across disciplines, including in journals of veterinary science as well as those addressing family studies and human violence. As one example, a study published in the *Irish Veterinary Journal* found that violence towards family pets was a predictor of future family violence and that:

Eighty seven per cent of women felt a facility to accommodate pets would have made their decision to leave the family home easier.

In Australia Community Legal Centres NSW reported that:

Up to 70% of domestic violence victims-survivors report abuse of a companion or other animal by the perpetrator.

So we, the Greens, believe that there is sufficient evidence on this matter that warrants an investigation about effective policy and legislative responses. I do note that frameworks addressing family violence recognise that the complexity of the issue requires a multidisciplinary approach in response. Surely, if we are serious about reducing levels of family violence across Victoria, we should be investigating all early predictors of that violence, and it is clear that animal violence is an early predictor that warrants further study and action.

We do remember and commend the work on preventing and reducing family violence that Fiona Richardson led for the government as the minister for family violence prevention. Victoria now has a number of policy and legislative responses in place that were previously missing. That work built on the sector's experience that a problem such as family violence requires a cohesive and multidisciplinary approach. I would encourage the Labor government to extend that same lens and bring animal welfare into the framework. This would incorporate input from medical and health staff, veterinarians, other healthcare professionals and community and social workers. Any lever that we are not already using that could potentially reduce family violence and reduce the levels of violence and abuse against animals surely deserves attention and investigation. I commend this motion to the house.

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (10:30): I also rise to speak on this splendid motion, and a very important motion it is as well. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms Purcell for raising it. I do note, and as she has already discussed in the wording of her motion too, that there has been a little bit of movement previously. I understand in 2020 the government did support a motion brought into this place by Ms Purcell's predecessor Mr Meddick, which was calling for support for companion animals as victim-survivors of family and domestic violence, FDV. This is an issue that touches many people greatly, and this is an issue that touches all of us in some way or another.

I do not wish to reiterate what other speakers have said, but it is really worth emphasising that for so many of us pets are our family members. There is a statistic I have seen that says 61 per cent of Australians consider their pets to be family, and frankly I am surprised that is not 91 per cent or higher. I am not sure how that 39 per cent of people interact with their pets, but I know in my household our three pets are certainly a dear and integral part of our family. They certainly enrich our lives in ways that we probably could not have even anticipated before we got them, and we are very, very lucky to have them.

The issue of family violence is one that has plagued our nation, and frankly well beyond that too, for a long time. In recent years and recent decades but especially in recent years we have seen a much greater awareness of this issue. We have seen a much greater willingness of governments to confront the issue and to acknowledge it as an issue. For too long it was considered to be behind closed doors – private business. Family violence does affect us all, and it weakens us as a society. It weakens us if we let it happen. As I believe Mr McIntosh referenced earlier, it was very pleasing to see quite some time ago now this government lead the nation in setting up the Royal Commission into Family Violence and acting on those recommendations as well. We have come a long way in what is still in the scheme of things a relatively short space of time in this state, but we always, always have more to do.

The motion brought into this house today by Ms Purcell is to me a very reasonable extension of that work and something that we should absolutely be looking at in terms of how this can interact with the family and domestic violence support that we provide to people, because our pets are our family. We would not ask, for example, a woman leaving a situation of domestic family violence to leave their children behind, and we should not ask them to leave their pets behind either. The decision would be absolutely gut-wrenching – you could not. You could not leave your children, you could not leave your pets – they are your family. And you could not be safe. As I said, there are many different facets

to this, but how can you be safe if your loved one is under threat, if you are worried by the fact that by your leaving your loved one might even be under a more serious threat because you cannot be there to look after them? Those examples that Ms Purcell gave earlier were also very powerful and really strike at the heart of what is at stake here.

Cruelty to animals has to be one of the darkest, most horrible things that any person can do. We have talked about some very horrific things in this chamber already this week, and looking at the notice paper for today, I suspect we will be later this afternoon as well. But cruelty to animals from a human: we can discuss the merits or otherwise of recreational activities or meat consumption or various other aspects – whilst I am a meat eater, and I do not resile from that, I acknowledge there is some disconnect within me over the process of how I eat meat – there is a very stark difference between the use of an animal, for want of a better word, whether it be for food or other purposes, and unprovoked, unrequired, pure cruelty. It is a horrific and a heinous thing for any person to do. It is a heinous thing too to inflict on the animal, and that is probably the point at which I first approach this from; for a defenceless cat or dog or budgerigar or pet pig, whatever it might be, it is absolutely horrendous. It is also of course horrendous, though, for the people, and too often the animals are used in this way as a tool for people who wish to commit violence upon their partners to inflict harm on them through the animal, which is equally as disgusting. So it is really good to see some action in this space. I am delighted that the government is supporting this motion today, and I hope every member of this house will support this motion too.

There are many, many aspects to this, and a few of the previous speakers have also discussed housing. There are a number of reforms in this space that I think other speakers have already gone to. I do think this is a timely point to note, though, that several years ago the then Andrews, now Allan Labor government changed the renting laws to mean that you cannot be unreasonably refused for having a pet in a rental property, and I think that is a really significant thing. It is a significant thing in all cases but for this reason especially; if nothing else, for this reason it is vital, and that is why it is so good to see Victoria leading the nation on that front.

I would also like to acknowledge our local councils. It is not every day we spruik them in this chamber, but some of them do excellent work in many different areas.

Tom McIntosh interjected.

Michael GALEA: I want to acknowledge – I am not sure if you were a councillor, Mr McIntosh – the City of Casey, who have a specialised family violence and domestic pets assistance program. I believe there are other councils across Victoria that do this as well; I believe Whittlesea might be another one. But in my area at least, the City of Casey have a program where they offer support to any domestic violence victim who is having to relocate because of domestic violence. The council will actually provide safe, secure shelter for those pets for up to 14 days. I do wish to acknowledge the City of Casey for doing that, and any constituents who might be facing that situation I strongly encourage to call the council on 9705 5200 for support with that.

Obviously, domestic and family violence can stir up difficult feelings and emotions for a lot of people, and anyone who is suffering from hearing this debate today or who wishes to seek some support for themselves I would also strongly encourage to call 1800RESPECT, which is 1800 737 732.

I think this motion is really quite self-explanatory. It does what it says on the packet, and that is a very good thing that we should all be supporting. We have come a long way in acknowledging the role that animals play in our lives. Obviously we have the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, better known as POCTA, as well as the many reforms I have briefly mentioned in the space of family and domestic violence. This is a very logical step towards supporting victims or people affected by family violence, as it is to ensuring that our pets are not used as a bargaining chip or as a weapon and most importantly of course that our beloved pets are not victimised by any person. This is a very, very

important step forward in that process, so I do commend this bill. I also wish to commend Ms Purcell for bringing it forward to us today.

In closing, the importance of pets as companions really cannot be underestimated. I could not finish this contribution without making a brief note about the thing that is on everybody's lips today, which is of course Sprite the Parliament dog. I join your calls, Acting President Terpstra, and I believe there have been a number of people speaking, a lot of journalists interested in this story today as well, which is great to see. We want to see Sprite back in the library. As Mr McIntosh says, it is a unity ticket across the chamber. It is very important for us to do that, but it is also extremely important for us to seriously support this motion today.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (10:40): I am pleased to rise to speak to motion 208 in Ms Purcell's name, and I think she was well aware of the comments I made in the last Parliament when Mr Meddick, who she worked for, brought a similar motion into the Parliament talking about companion animals and the links to family violence. We all recognise there is evidence of a clear link between animal abuse and family violence. As has been highlighted by this motion, animal abuse occurs in up to 53 per cent of family domestic violence situations. I see that the RSPCA has quoted those figures, and they say:

Numerous studies have confirmed that in households with companion animals experiencing domestic violence and abuse, there is also a high probability of animal abuse. For example, echoing international research, a study in Victoria reported that 53% of women entering a refuge to escape domestic violence and abuse reported that their pets had been harmed.

I have been speaking about this for a long time. At the time when I was going through the child abuse inquiry, I spoke to a lot of people who were victims of child abuse, and I was aware of some very significant elements of child abuse, both institutional abuse and domestic abuse. Over that period of time I was told some horrendous stories about the clear link between how perpetrators of domestic violence do horrific things to pets to get at their partners or their children. In one particular case I was told about a father shooting the animal in front of the children – their pet dog. It was a heartbreaking story and one that really did tear at my heartstrings because I adore animals. I grew up on a farm and we had a menagerie. I think I have said that a few times in here. I had pets galore, and I am still very keen on pets. But I do think that most people who have pets just understand their value and adore them, and they are very often part of the family.

There is that concern, that cruelty to animals in family violence situations should not be tolerated, and I do not understand how anybody could do violence against a fellow human, let alone an animal. So I do feel for some of these stories that I hear. I have heard stories where people have had their pets run over. It has been said, 'Oh, it was an accident,' but in actual fact they were subject to family violence and trying to get out of the family violence situation. They were terrified about what might happen, and those pets were killed. Often, as we know, family violence victims do not leave, because they want to protect their pets. I think that is so, so heartbreaking. We know those stats too.

There has been some very good work in terms of animal aid shelters, and I have been out to many. I have visited those, and I want to put on record the work of one animal aid centre out in Coldstream that I visited some years ago. The former member for McEwen Fran Bailey was the chair of it. She did great work out there, and they took in a lot of animals that were subject to family violence. It was really at that time when the discussion was happening. There was clear evidence of animals that had been abused. These aid shelters took them in and they really did tremendous work, all of those working against cruelty to animals and giving shelter to these abused or abandoned pets.

If I can just go back to the issue around family violence – I am slightly deviating, but it is important that we talk about these situations – it is timely that this motion is on the record here because of the government's announcement today about bringing in laws on strangulation. I have to say they are very slow to the party on this, because I together with the former leader back in 2018, as part of that election, put a policy that we would legislate to amend the Crimes Act 1958 to make non-fatal strangulation,

choking and suffocation in a domestic setting a criminal offence. And literally the government today has lifted our policy.

A member interjected.

Georgie CROZIER: Exactly the same. So it is extraordinary that after all the hullabaloo about family violence and the royal commission it has taken this long. At the time, in 2018, when I was talking about this policy, Queensland had introduced a policy in 2016, so two years prior. There was plenty of evidence around the country and around the world why this needed to be done. The police were telling me, the police were telling the government, and yet it is 2023 – it has taken all that time for them to introduce this law. So they cannot say that they are up and running on some of this stuff. They need to really lift their game, because it was a simple piece of legislation that could have been brought in and should have been brought in. Unfortunately we did not get the opportunity, clearly, to be able to implement it, but I still say I am pleased that the government has listened to our policy and mimicked what we took to the people in 2018 on that very important issue.

But returning back to this important motion in the final few minutes that I have got, the motion goes on to talk about:

concern for the welfare of companion animals is a significant contributor to women and children remaining in violent homes ...

which I have spoken about –

the property status of animals under the current legislation makes it easy for perpetrators to acquire and maintain ownership of pets for use in coercive control ...

We know that domestic violence perpetrators do use that coercive control, and that is a clear sign of how so much domestic violence is perpetrated – and very seriously so too, I might add. I have spoken about the emerging research. It is clear that that is evident, and I think more needs to be done on it. The point is that I think the entire house supported the motion. I cannot remember the vote; Ms Purcell might remember.

Georgie Purcell: Passed unanimously.

Georgie CROZIER: Yes, passed unanimously in 2020. So again I say it is 2023 – a bit the same. You are talking about it now. I was talking about introducing laws and making strangulation in domestic violence a crime back in 2018, and the government is still sitting on its hands. You know, they talk the big game but on some of these important issues they do not deliver at all.

I just want to say that this is an important motion. I think there is an understanding amongst members in the house of that direct correlation between family violence, coercive controls, the abuse of animals and the cruelty to animals in certain family violence situations. Victims often find it very difficult to leave the situation because of their pets, and that also is a very heartbreaking situation. Again, I say I think this motion has got some excellent points to it, and I think the contributions have been very thoughtful and very considered and that all understand the intent of this motion.

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (10:49): I also rise to make a contribution on this motion brought by Ms Purcell in regard to family violence, and I want to thank Ms Purcell for bringing this motion. I know she is a passionate and strident advocate for all things animal and animal welfare, as am I. I am also a passionate supporter of animal welfare rights, and I want to also acknowledge and thank Ms Crozier for her thoughtful contribution in regard to this motion, because I think all of us are pretty clear on what we know about the sorts of behaviours that go along with family violence. We often see that animals are used as a bargaining chip and as coercive control to exert influence and force women to either stay or enter behaviours or do things they would not want to ordinarily do. But animals are often used as a tool to manipulate with the threat of harm to those animals.

As this motion talks about, the evidence supports and reflects that these are known facts. We know that perpetrators of family violence or people who use violence against others will use anything that a person might have an emotional connection to, and we know that our companion animals certainly fall into that category. Many of us in this place have companion animals. I know Ms Crozier talked about her menagerie that she had when she was growing up, and of course I myself also have a menagerie at home. I have had chickens – currently I do not have any chickens. But my daughter has a blue-tongue lizard. We have got a cat, and we have got a dog. I know Ms Shing has got donkeys. There are so many, many varied pets and animals that if we did a poll amongst caucus members there would be all sorts and all manner of animals. What that shows is that many of us hold our companion animals very dear to us and they hold a special place in our hearts, and it is just an absolute travesty that somebody who is seeking really to do harm to others would use something that is so dear to many of us as a tool to force behaviour and to threaten and coerce. I think the minister just read my email.

Gayle Tierney: I thought it was a media release.

Sonja TERPSTRA: No, it was not a media release, it was me campaigning to return Sprite to the Parliament. I just digress for a moment from this motion, but I am on a roll with Sprite today. This motion is actually very timely as well, given that we have had an unceremonious decision to ban poor old Sprite, the Parliament pup, from Spring Street – unceremonious, un-Australian, unilateral and unwarranted. Anyway, I will return to this motion.

It is important to acknowledge the links that family violence perpetrators use to exert control over women. I note that there are some very important statistics in this motion. They are broad, but they speak to a bigger story and an important story that is often not given the attention that it needs to be given. The motion says:

studies show women with companion animals have reported threatened or deliberate animal abuse in up to 53 per cent of FDV situations ...

That is a staggering statistic and it is very concerning, and again it speaks to the individuals who seek to influence women in a coercive way. For example, if a woman seeks to leave an abusive relationship, then they may pull out all the stops, all the ways of influencing, manipulating and controlling that woman, to stop her from basically exiting that relationship. Often pets are part of that.

I know Ms Crozier talked as well in her contribution about, when she was sitting on the child abuse inquiry, the sorts of well-documented violent acts that are perpetrated on animals, and I know the RSPCA is often called in when there are concerns about animal welfare. Often when there have been violent acts committed towards animals, there is a very strong link that shows that that person is also very highly likely to behave in similar ways towards humans. It is just terrible.

Like I said earlier, I have lots of animals, and I might just share this anecdote with the chamber as well. I note Dr Heath's contribution before about her sister and the cat – Chicago, was it?

Renee Heath: Yes.

Sonja TERPSTRA: Yes. You can see the difference that companion animals make to our lives. It is really important. So I will just give this anecdote. When I was living in Canberra many years ago – this was around the time of the Canberra bushfires – we had to get out of our house very quickly. The bushfires were coming at us, and the very first thing that I went to was: 'Where are my animals?' I did not really care about having shoes on my feet; I did not care about photos or any of those things. It was: 'Where are the animals?' Our cat ran under the bed. My husband was dutifully directed to go and find the cat from under the bed, because obviously it was very noisy and it was a bit scary. But also we had chickens at the time, and my immediate response was to grab the washing sack that we had in a basket – I was literally going to run out to the backyard, put the chickens in the washing sack and just run to the car, because it was coming at us.

But by the time I went to the back door, there were embers in the air, and I just knew that I could not get the chickens. They were free-ranging in the backyard, so it was not like they were in a pen – they were not going to get roasted, but that was a concern. My first instinct was to protect my animals, to save my animals. When we did leave the house, we had a car full of animals – dogs, cats – and babies, and all of us just got out of there. Again, my first instinct as a woman and as someone who has had companion animals my whole life was to get those animals. So I completely understand the connection that women have to animals. Especially in that situation when you are fleeing for your life, your mind goes to ‘Where are my animals?’ You can see why a perpetrator of family violence uses those emotional connections to animals to exert control. It is terrible.

The house would be well aware that we have done an enormous amount of work on family violence. The government approach to reducing family violence is enormous. The Allan Labor government is leading the nation in our commitment to addressing family violence. We have invested over \$3.88 billion to prevent and respond to incidents of family violence. We have acquitted the 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and this was the first of its kind. But we know we can do more and we can continue to improve those things, and we are very happy to listen to what Ms Purcell has to say. These things do evolve, and the more we become aware of different aspects of family violence, the better we are able to respond to them as well. We have made changes to our laws to ensure landlords cannot reject a family if they have a pet, so that gives more housing options for families.

I know that I visited a family violence shelter in my region as well – I will not name where that shelter is for obvious reasons; it needs to remain secret. But one of the things that that shelter advised me of was that they also took pets into the shelter, which has also been a bit of an issue. If there is not an availability of family violence shelters to flee to for women that have pets, it can be a problem. That was a number of years ago, so there was an early acknowledgement of the role that domestic violence shelters can play for women fleeing family violence – that they need to have their animals with them. You do not want that to become a barrier to people who might be fleeing family violence. It is an important thing. Again, it is a continued effort to make sure that we continue to work on addressing the causes of family violence. It is a never-ending situation. As I said, although we have done lots of work on the family violence royal commission, we have got to continue to work on that, and we will continue to do that.

In terms of the 2021–22 budget, we did provide further funding support for victim-survivors of family violence. This included funding for refuges to access pet boarding, pet foster care rehousing programs and fitting out accommodation for the needs of pets. Not only did we have an action on making sure shelters could accommodate, but then further down the track that those accommodations could be made as well.

I have got about 30 seconds left on the clock. There is so much more that I could say on this. It is a very important motion. Again, I thank Ms Purcell for bringing it. I just want to note too that the contributions in the chamber today have been really excellent: everyone is acknowledging the important aspect that our companion animals bring to all of our lives. I will just conclude by saying that I am on Team Sprite. Let us bring Sprite back to Spring Street.

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (10:59): I am pleased to rise to put my voice today to this motion 208 from Ms Purcell on the interaction between domestic pets – companion animals – and domestic violence. Unfortunately, there is a weaponisation of those domestic pets, who provide such unconditional love at a time generally when women and children are facing abuse in the home and are facing abuse in a variety of ways, whether that be physical abuse or sexual abuse or whether it be emotional and psychological abuse. We certainly see the use of coercive control by perpetrators to intimidate their spouse or a significant other – using these domestic animals, these companion pets, to hold the victim to ransom.

I would like to just provide some context. In my first year as an MP – and it sticks in my mind all these years later – there was a domestic violence case, and I will remain totally neutral on where and how. But it was one of my constituents, and indeed a psychologist felt this was a compelling and concerning case. Not only was there abuse of an animal, but there was significant physical abuse of the dear lady. She had moved away from the home, and at that home was her beloved horse. She was suffering physically and seeing a psychologist, but the great constraint that she was suffering from was how to get access to that horse and get the horse back to her new home. That really took the combined effort of Victoria Police and other agencies. But the power that these perpetrators have is so debilitating, and they understand the power that they have over their victim. It was pleasing to see that after much toing and froing – and indeed an intervention order of course – there was recognition that that horse did belong to her, and all did end well. But the scars of those interactions last a lifetime – not only the scars on the human but certainly the scars on the animals as well. So that is seared into my mind. I am not sure how effective we were, but I know we attempted to work through VicPol and other agencies to ensure that that situation was resolved.

A recent Victorian survey – and there have been many surveys quoted, so I will not go through all of them – shows that in 50 per cent of cases where there is domestic and family violence, the pet is either hurt or even killed. We know in those darkest of times, when a person is suffering so much, they turn to any light, any hope, any kindness and any level of unconditional love, and that is what these family pets and domestic animals can mean in times of huge significant stress.

One thing I know is very important, and I want to give a shout-out to Gippsland Women's Health. Over many years they have run a significant awareness and education program. I am also aware that they have been into sporting clubs, our football and netball clubs, across Gippsland, talking about domestic violence to young people, to young sportspeople and to the gamut of people eating at the end of a football or netball training night to raise awareness about what violence looks like. What are the actual definition, the signs and the symptoms of that violence, within the people's sphere of understanding – say, their friendship group or acquaintance group? They have done an amazing job, and all hail to them. I am sure there are many, many such organisations across the state.

One of the things that is quite interesting in looking at this motion is a 2018 report, *Animal Victims of Domestic and Family Violence: Raising Youth Awareness*, by the New South Wales Health Education Centre against Violence. It talks about completing pilot programs in schools, talking about violence against animals being an indicator of domestic violence and really drilling down into this with young people. In this case it was specifically in relation to boys, but I am certainly not going to put a fence around that. But that was this particular case study, which said:

Innovative programs to integrate animal abuse in the context of domestic ... violence, we suggest, provide a foundation for promoting the inclusion of animals in Domestic and Family Violence ...

and not only in an act but certainly in veterinarian policy, so, if you go a little bit broader, for our veterinary associations, where we have all taken our beloved pets, to have an awareness around that, and also service standards, guidelines and practices in that broad range of any animal interaction. I put these as useful findings.

I also note that in 2020 the then Liberal and National New South Wales government actually legislated for including an increase in the term of or to change the definition of 'intimidation' in relation to including animals in, in this case, what was called the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. It is pleasing to see that the then prevention of domestic violence minister Mark Speakman certainly noted the importance of that protection of animals in relation to domestic violence.

If you look at our Family Violence Protection Act 2008, there is certainly a segment that could be expanded to include this. Therefore the Nationals are looking forward to seeing this motion go through the house, I would imagine unanimously, and to seeing a review. Certainly it has to fit in, there has to be that legislative background work, but it could well be that the Allan government look to New South Wales as a good template to see how that could be incorporated.

In concluding, I understand certainly from the experience of my constituent's particular case the awful and corrupt nature of people who choose to use innocent animals to coerce behaviour. I too love animals and always give a shout-out to – I think it is still operational – the Keysborough animal shelter for providing our beloved pet. They become part of our family. Not only is it unspeakable and unthinkable to inflict domestic violence on children, on spouses, on partners et cetera, but to do that with glee on animals is absolutely untenable.

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (11:08): Today I rise to speak to Ms Purcell's motion. I want to begin by saying that I think everyone in this chamber would have a love for animals. It would make you barely human not to love animals; it is an inherent part of human nature. Earlier this year we lost our little dog Ronnie at just the tender age of two – gone too soon but not forgotten – which is why this motion should be taken seriously, and I do take this motion seriously. The motion says:

That this house notes that:

- (1) companion animal abuse is a form of family and domestic violence (FDV);
- (2) studies show women with companion animals have reported threatened or deliberate animal abuse in up to 53 per cent of FDV situations;
- (3) concern for the welfare of companion animals is a significant contributor to women and children remaining in violent homes;
- (4) the property status of animals under the current legislation makes it easy for perpetrators to acquire and maintain ownership of pets for use in coercive control;
- (5) emerging research shows clear links between animal cruelty and the increased likelihood of violence against humans;
- (6) in 2020 the government supported a motion to better protect companion animals and victim-survivors in situations of FDV;

and calls on the government to investigate amending the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 to include a specific offence for cruelty to animals as a form of early intervention and to further investigate the link between violence towards animals and humans in order to make appropriate reforms.

This is where the motion ends. It is a heavy motion. All humans, all people and anyone with a soul should find domestic violence to be abhorrent. It does not take being a father to make that so, but it does put it in perspective for me at least. We know that women are vastly more likely than men to be victims of domestic violence. That does not discount the men who are suffering from domestic violence, but it is just the truth. I am a son and a husband, but I am also the father of five daughters.

It is shocking and appalling that this happens, so let me unpack how this works. I did a bit of research on the topic to prepare for this. Pets can be the subject of threats of harm but can also be taken by an abusive person who is committing family violence as a means of coercive control. That means that victims can be put in an impossible position of having to choose between two impossible choices. Pets can also be harmed or killed by a current or former partner or even a family member as a way of indirect violence towards a victim who may have a restraining order or where they are unable to attack that person specifically. Post a relationship – and this is hard to say – a perpetrator may starve, abuse, neglect, threaten to harm or kill a pet when a victim-survivor flees the home, and this harm is immense. It can cause massive psychological and economic trauma to these survivors, and let us not forget the impact on children, who can be vulnerable, unable to escape and forced to witness and sometimes even participate in these acts of animal cruelty. One study of self-selecting victim-survivors who owned a pet at the time of family violence notes that there were behavioural changes 85 per cent of the time with their pets, and much of the time these people who reported the changes noted that the changes were not small but significant and long term, with symptoms including fear of men and anxiety. We know that this can lead to lifelong issues for pets.

Animal welfare remains a priority for the Allan Labor government. I think it is fair to say that Victoria has some of the most progressive and modern approaches in this space. We know, like with other forms of coercive control, it can be difficult to identify. Normally perpetrated behind closed doors, the

use of pets to continue this cycle obviously can occur more subtly. Take the example of using financial abuse to control a victim-survivor. Perpetrators can withhold money when they need to take a sick pet to a vet or buy them food. This leads to a cycle of dependency and makes it increasingly hard to escape. There is no better evidence than when victims are reluctant to report family violence and believe that delaying fleeing a violent situation is best out of concern for their pet and their wellbeing. I believe this has been noted in today's debate already, but it needs to be re-emphasised. One study found 35 per cent of women delayed seeking refuge for this very reason, and many refugees for crisis accommodation in Victoria report being unable to house pets, making this even harder.

Research shows that those who harm pets are more likely to be a family violence offender. On top of that they are more likely to offend in general. It is part of the homicidal triad. Research shows harm to pets occurs more frequently where violence is also perpetrated against survivors. One study found that perpetrators who harm pets in a family violence context are five times more likely to abuse their partners and more likely to use stalking and emotional, physical or sexual violence. Each of these is truly evil. No-one should ever see their pets go through this, and it is important that we consider the reality of these risks in the context of family violence. This is not rare. The link is real. We have also seen contributions across the chamber today note this.

The Sentencing Advisory Council referred to studies in their 2019 report *Animal Cruelty Offences in Victoria*, noting:

... studies of pet-owning women seeking services from domestic violence shelters have found that between 47% and 71% of the respondents' male partners had threatened, harmed or killed their pet.

This has been intense, and I thank Ms Purcell for raising it. It has been important. I note Ms Purcell is taking on a great tradition set by her former boss Mr Meddick in advocating in this space, and I am proud of the work we have done in this space. In the 2022–23 budget we delivered a record \$18.6 million package to support animal care and protection. Since being elected in 2014 the Andrews and now Allan Labor government has invested \$8.2 million in shelters and in carers at animal welfare organisations to improve the welfare of Victorian pets. We have got plenty of reforms to be proud of. These include banning cruel puppy farms, the strictest breeding rules in the country, making it an offence to sell a pet without a valid microchip and a source number from the pet exchange register, removing the need for greyhounds to be muzzled in public and Victoria's first *Animal Welfare Action Plan*, which recognises that animals are sentient – something I am sure Peter Singer would appreciate.

Under the Allan Labor government our reforms for pets are nation leading. No longer must Victorians choose between pets that they love and a place to live, thanks to the Andrews Labor government's and now Allan Labor government's historic laws providing renters the right to keep a pet. We know for those who are fleeing violence it can often be hard to find a house. Why should it be made a bit harder by having to worry about keeping a pet? This is good reform indeed. We have provided additional funding to the RSPCA Victoria inspectorate to improve compliance and enforcement and to establish Animal Welfare Victoria, which brings together all aspects of animal welfare in its own dedicated agency. We have reformed the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee to ensure government receives expert advice. This is on top of introducing mandatory reporting of animal fate data for dogs and cats in shelters and pounds. We were the first state to do this, after all.

I speak about housing a lot in this place, and for good reason. It is important to reflect on our progress in this space when it comes to housing survivors. There is always the work that has to be done, but I am proud to be a member of the Allan Labor government, which is not afraid of talking about these tough tasks. The 2022–23 budget last year invested \$69.1 million over four years to fund existing family violence refuges, to build and staff two new refuges and upgrade three existing partner agencies' operating facilities and to purchase six new crisis accommodation properties. This year's budget has committed to delivering \$40.4 million for a range of targeted housing and support to transform and meet critical demand, including women-specific services and of course the vitally important congregate housing facilities, of which we are delivering four. We also acquired 325 social

housing dwellings, prioritised family violence victim-survivors and their families for social housing through the Victorian Housing Register, redeveloped 17 Homes Victoria owned family violence refuges to the core and cluster model, constructed three Aboriginal family violence refuges, provided over 6500 flexible support packages each year to help victim-survivors and supported over 1800 people with private rental assistance.

There is always more to do, and we will always continue to work on building our reforms where we can. That includes modernising our family welfare regulatory framework, delivering the first ever pet census and progressing reforms to the rehoming of pets.

I would also like to put forward my support for Sprite coming back to the parliamentary precinct, where he belongs.

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (11:18): In my 48 seconds I would like to thank Georgie for moving this motion. I live in the City of Casey, and have done for about 20 years, where I have raised my family. It is reported to have the highest domestic violence incidence in Victoria. The Wayss manager in Dandenong, where my office is, also mentioned that there has been an increase in terms of spending for women and children in Dandenong, Cardinia and Casey. I think in terms of animals, the cruelty that people have had to undergo in losing their animals, not being able to take them with them, or seeing them suffer from their own abuser and staying there because either they cannot take their animals with them or it is easier to stay and suffer in that situation than to find themselves homeless and unable to take everything that is dear to them is a real issue. So I want to say thank you and commend this motion to the house.

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (11:19): I want to start by thanking everyone for their very valuable contributions here today. Often as politicians we get a bad rap, and often I think it is understandable, but I really think the best is on display when we are all in this place in agreement and working together on a very, very important issue that will not just transform and save the lives of animals but have the real potential to save the lives of women and children and people experiencing family violence as well, and that is so deeply important.

The next thing that I would say is that while I thank the government for their indication and their commitment today that they will work with me and other members of this place towards this outcome, we must do it quickly, because we know that with every single day that goes by where this issue is not addressed there are people in this state experiencing violence and there are pets in this state experiencing violence, and we have the opportunity here with our collective power to end that and to change that. Not only will this form of early intervention be saving animal lives, it will be saving the lives of those people experiencing violence or even stopping it from happening in the first place, which would always be our goal – to eradicate family violence in this state, whether that be to humans or to animals.

Once we have finished this work and can legislate an animal cruelty offence or a recognition of animals in our Family Violence Protection Act 2008, I just want to remind the government that there is more work to be done. One of the biggest issues facing people experiencing violence in this state has a simple solution, and that issue is the registration of animals to perpetrators, which stops people from being able to take their pets because they can be charged with theft if they do so, even if that animal is being harmed, even if there is violence to that animal in the home, because our animal cruelty laws are not strong enough. This leads me to my next point: that a very important part of this work will be delivering on our commitment for a brand new animal care and protection act which will replace the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, which I know many of us have been eagerly waiting to see over the past few years. I hope that it is delivered soon.

I want to thank all members here today in this place for sharing their stories and for being vulnerable. I know that it is often not easy to share many of the stories that we did today, but it is so important to help us understand why this reform is so necessary. But most of all I want to thank the countless

women and their families that reached out to me when I announced that I was bringing this for debate but also, formerly, many of the women that I spoke to when I was working for Andy Meddick, when he was the Animal Justice Party MP in this place, and that we have been able to reconnect with and update on the work that we are picking up now. They are deeply grateful and very excited, and they hope that we can act on this very quickly.

I want to acknowledge every woman, every child and every animal that has been lost as a victim. There are lives that we have not been able to save prior to this, but we can commit to making sure that it does not happen to anyone else again. So to all victim-survivors and the families of people who have been lost to family violence, I just want to acknowledge that this can be a very difficult and hard debate to have but a very, very important one and one that I am always so thankful that we can be united on. I will leave it there. Thank you very much, everyone, for your contributions.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid

Premier

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (11:23): I move:

That this house requests that the Legislative Assembly grant leave to the Premier, the Honourable Jacinta Allan MP, to appear before the Legislative Council Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid to provide evidence in her capacity as the former Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery.

To provide a bit of context around this motion, on 9 October the Commonwealth Games inquiry resolved to request that the Premier appear in her capacity as the former minister. I would say this is using standard procedures through Parliament. Basically what this does is it sends a message to the Assembly requesting that she be granted leave. Ultimately, it will be up to the Assembly whether or not they grant leave to the Premier.

We have already heard in the inquiry that at least half a billion dollars has been wasted on this bid. I take my role very seriously on this committee, and I think that it is important that the committee get to the bottom of those decisions that were made that led to that wastage and that the Premier, in her former role as minister, was key in this. What I would like to see at a minimum and what I think the Victorian public would expect as a minimum is that the Premier show up and tell us in her words what went wrong and what the government has learned from this, because that is the ultimate aim of these inquiries, really – to try and learn from mistakes that happened in the past and make sure that they do not happen again. So I would very much like the Premier to appear. I know that there have been public statements in which she has said she will not appear, but at least she would get an invitation and she could respond to that invitation as the Assembly sees fit.

It is unusual to use this mechanism; however, it is not unprecedented. I will let you know of a few instances where this has happened in the past. In 2007 the Assembly granted leave for the Minister for Consumer Affairs to appear before the legislation committee – that was Anthony Robinson MP. Other Assembly MPs have given evidence at hearings before: Andrew McIntosh MP, Heidi Victoria MP and Neale Burgess MP for the Select Committee on Public Land Development in 2007; and Susanna Sheed MP in the Legal and Social Issues Committee in 2020. In the 55th Parliament, between 2003 and 2006, the Assembly granted leave for any minister of the Assembly to attend meetings of the Council's legislation committee, which was new, and at that time the Honourable Lynne Kosky MP appeared, talking about the Education and Training Reform Bill of 2006. So it is possible to use this mechanism, and I would hope that the new Premier would show accountability for what has happened during this bid and that she will come and talk to the committee about what has happened, because I think the Victorian public deserve it.

Tom McINTOSH (Eastern Victoria) (11:26): I rise to speak to Mr Limbrick's motion 206 that the Premier appear before the Legislative Council Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid, a committee that I and a number of others – nine of us actually – in this house are on. I stand today and do not support this motion, nor does the government. Just to put some context around this, the government was willing to help at the last minute when the Commonwealth Games needed a host city. We were willing to stand up, and we put a focus around our regions and supporting our regions through the commitment to those games. But the government was not willing to put a price tag of \$6 billion to \$7 billion on a 12-day event. So what we are doing, as I will come to, is continuing that commitment to regional Victoria, but for that 12-day event we were not willing to put that \$6 billion to \$7 billion price tag on, which we must note the Leader of the Opposition has supported. Their previous leader – which iteration was that? – Mr Guy supported the games being entered into, and their current opposition leader supported the position that we have taken to exit the games.

To this motion, I do want to start by acknowledging Mr Limbrick. He has been a very good chair of this committee, and it is functioning well from a governance perspective, but I do want to speak to this motion. Those opposite really concern themselves with past practice as hundreds of years –

Members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Sonja Terpstra): Order! Sorry, Mr McIntosh. There is a level of noise coming from this side of the chamber. I am actually struggling to hear Mr McIntosh, so could we just hold it down a little bit on this side so I can hear what Mr McIntosh is saying.

Tom McINTOSH: Thank you, Acting President. Coming to the history that Mr Davis likes to speak to on a very regular basis, it has been recognised for hundreds of years in the Westminster system that members hold certain privileges and immunities based on their roles as members of Parliament. The independence of the houses of Parliament means that a committee cannot claim authority over a member of the other house and that members hold immunities based on this independence. This view is supported by views on British parliamentary practice, the basis of our system, which emphasises strongly the independence of both houses of Parliament.

David Limbrick: On a point of order, Acting President, I would point to the fact that this motion is not claiming authority over the Assembly. It is merely asking – an invitation. We are in no way claiming authority.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Sonja Terpstra): There is no point of order.

Tom McINTOSH: It emphasises strongly the independence of both houses of that Parliament from each other and the equality of their powers:

The leading principle, which appears to pervade all the proceedings between the two Houses of Parliament, is, That there shall subsist a perfect equality with respect to each other; and that they shall be, in every respect, totally independent one of the other. – From hence it is, that neither House can claim, much less exercise, any authority over a Member of the other ...

That being what it is, the Premier has answered the questions asked of her. The Premier has been up-front and engaged in this issue. This motion is nothing but a political stunt, which is something that does not surprise us when it comes to the Liberal–Nationals. They have no policies; they have no plans. I am not sure if they know what their values are. I am not sure if they know why they are even here. They lurch from one stunt to another. If you look at the way they call for committees, if you look at –

Matthew Bach: On a point of order, Acting President, if memory serves, our standing orders stipulate that contributions in this place must be factual. The speaker has asserted that this is a motion of the Liberals and Nationals. It is not.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Sonja Terpstra): There is no point of order.

Michael Galea: Further to the point of order, Acting President, Mr McIntosh I believe is directly addressing the motion and has acknowledged that this is a motion being put forward by Mr Limbrick.

Matthew Bach interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Sonja Terpstra): No, there is nothing further to any point of order, because there is no point of order.

Tom McINTOSH: I would like to be very clear: at that point I was not talking about the committee, I was talking about the lack of any sort of plan, vision or policy out of the Liberal–National parties. So just to make that clear, they have no plan, vision or policies.

David Davis: On a point of order, President, on relevance, the member is not speaking directly to this motion here. The motion is actually a very tight and narrow motion. It is not about the Liberals and the National Party, it is about a request to the Assembly to allow the Premier to attend. That is all it is.

Michael Galea: On the point of order, President, Mr McIntosh has been directly relevant to the question, and he is addressing the terms of the motion. He is speaking about the Commonwealth Games.

The PRESIDENT: I will just call all speakers to the motion.

Tom McINTOSH: The point I was making: as a consequence of the Liberals and the Nationals not knowing their values, not having a plan and not having any policies, our committees are used as places for stunts. They wake up and think, ‘What can we do today? What might get some figment of someone’s imagination?’ And they come up with absolutely hollow –

Matthew Bach: On a point of order, President, the speaker is openly flouting your ruling. He is not addressing the motion. He is using this as an opportunity to attack the opposition in a manner that has no relevance to the motion. Respectfully I would ask you, President, to underscore once again the ruling that you have already made and that the speaker is flouting.

Sonja Terpstra: Further to the point of order, President, I note that there are a range of points of order being made by those opposite that are really designed to do nothing more than soak up the time that Mr McIntosh has to speak on this issue. They are debating the motion. Mr McIntosh can make his contribution on this motion – and I would ask that Mr McIntosh’s clock be reset – without interruption from those opposite.

The PRESIDENT: The standing orders do not afford me to be able to reset a clock in these types of debates. Mr McIntosh I understand is the first speaker for the government on this. He has some latitude, and I did hear him talk about committees when he got a couple of sentences out.

Tom McINTOSH: Back to the point of what committees are being used for: I think I have made my point pretty clearly. As to this committee, this committee is getting a very good understanding of the importance for this government of regional Victoria, and its investment in it.

We with long memories understand that those opposite have no commitment to regional Victoria. That is why the \$2 billion package that has come out of the Commonwealth Games is going to invest in housing, it is going to invest in supporting tourism and it is going to invest in supporting community sport and our volunteers. It is going to support communities. Those on that side – I do not think they have had a new idea since Thatcher. They do not believe in society – it is just the individual. Do you know what? In regional and rural towns and communities, you need to support communities, because that is what makes them thrive. That is exactly what we are doing, and that is exactly what we are doing with the regional package. We are supporting our regional communities so they can come together and they can thrive. We know how important housing is. That is why we have got a billion dollars of housing – to support Victorians right across regional Victoria.

It does not matter where you live in regional Victoria, you should be able to get good-quality, affordable, safe housing, and that is exactly what we are going to provide. It should not matter where you live in Victoria. You get to access to good-quality sports venues, you get to create community, you get to support each other and you get to look after your health – your mental health and the health of the community. That is exactly what we are investing in. We are investing in tiny towns – small, remote towns. We are investing in them. We are investing in multitudes of ways to support our communities. There is \$150 million that we have got to support workers who are supporting our tourism. Because the regions are thriving, unlike in the 1990s, when this lot were in charge and the regions were collapsing. Things were being left to rot into the ground. The regions are thriving. We are putting infrastructure in, we are putting services in and we are backing regional and rural Victorians.

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (11:37): This is a very modest motion. It simply seeks a way to allow the Legislative Assembly to set up a procedure for Premier Allan to attend, given she was the minister primarily responsible for the Commonwealth Games. Exclusive cognisance is an important concept, and I strongly support it, but it does not mean that one house cannot request that another house allow a member to attend. I can indicate to the chamber that I have personally seen four members of the lower house attend parliamentary committees. One committee I chaired, with Sue Pennicuik as a member, the public land committee, had three members of the Assembly give evidence: Andrew McIntosh, Heidi Victoria and Neale Burgess – three lower house MPs who gave evidence to that committee on matters of relevance to their local electorates. Equally, I have seen ministers attend parliamentary committees of this chamber. Tony Robinson is the one that comes to mind. I saw him attend the legislation committee to give evidence to that committee, and there is nothing wrong with that.

Michael Galea interjected.

David DAVIS: Nonetheless, it was still a committee of this chamber, a committee established under the standing orders of this chamber. It is no different in essence in terms of exclusive cognisance to a select committee or a standing committee or any other committee. There is no intrinsic reason.

I note that those cases are very clear cases. There are others historically in which Assembly members have been granted leave to appear before Council committees: as far back as 1884, at the select committee on the Legal Profession Practice Bill; from 1882 to 1883, the select committee on railway construction; and from 1858 to 1859, the select committee on the management of the Board of Land and Works. There is actually a long sweep back far into history of one chamber asking the other chamber to allow its members to attend. The chambers can take their own view – there is nothing that we can do about that. Exclusive cognisance means what it says, but there is nothing at all in history, practice or procedure that suggests that there is anything wrong, unusual or out of order with a lower house member attending an upper house select committee.

Indeed in the Senate this is routine practice. In *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice* – for those who want to go and see it, page 562 – there is regular understanding that members of different chambers will appear at different committees. So there is actually a really sensible practice with one of the chambers that we would closely associate ourselves with, and the process is logical and sensible. It is respectful, and I would just hope that similar respect is shown by the Assembly in allowing Minister Allan to attend. This is quite an unprecedented thing that has occurred with the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, and it has done considerable damage. I am not going to go over all of that now; it is well understood, and the select committee's role is to look at a number of those points. But as part of its work it has resolved that it will seek the attendance of a number of lower house members.

Today, on Mr Limbrick's work and motion, we are seeking to ask for the attendance of the now Premier – at the time, the Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery – the relevant minister who had clear, direct primary responsibility for the management of the whole process of the Commonwealth Games. It would be extraordinary if the committee did not ask to have Jacinta Allan

attend. It would be extraordinary if we did not seek to ask the person who had primary and direct ministerial responsibility to attend. We have obviously had some departmental people, and we will have more. We will have community people and obviously sports people; logically they would be the sorts of people that we would see. I do not think I am revealing anything that is beyond the purview. We would obviously seek to understand what has happened in a number of regional areas as well.

The primary responsibility lay with Jacinta Allan as the minister, and the committee is simply saying to the chamber, 'Look, we need your support to request the attendance of Jacinta Allan', and it is doing so respectfully. Under exclusive cognisance it is clearly a matter for the Assembly, but there is absolutely no reason in precedent why the Assembly could not give leave to the minister to attend at her arrangement and explain the processes that occurred and how the state got itself into the terrible predicament with the Commonwealth Games that it did.

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (11:42): The Greens will be supporting this motion. We are not really interested in any political pointscoring, but this is about the principles of transparency and accountability. As the minister responsible at the time, I believe it is more than reasonable that Jacinta Allan appear to answer questions about decision-making processes. In the very short time that this committee inquiry has been running it has really only reinforced our view that the existing parliamentary oversight mechanisms are inadequate, and it is quite possible we would not be in the position we are in today if we had stronger oversight.

The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee should have been able to apply the scrutiny to the Commonwealth Games that this select committee is now attempting to do, but the system we have with PAEC does not enable that to happen. The sum total of Commonwealth Games scrutiny by this Parliament has been the 1-hour appearance of each of the two ministers responsible for legacy and delivery respectfully, and much of that time in PAEC was taken up by Dorothy Dixers from government members. Many of the relevant departments did not appear with those ministers before PAEC, and those that did only got to contribute when the ministers called on them. So it is really inadequate oversight with the existing mechanisms.

A major project like the Commonwealth Games – regardless of the final figures, even at the outset it was going to spend billions of taxpayer dollars – should automatically be the subject of some kind of higher level of parliamentary oversight. At the moment we do not have any processes that do that for major projects. So really, transparency and accountability are core requirements for ensuring integrity in government, and I believe that is something we should all be supporting.

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (11:44): Today I rise to speak to the Libertarian Party motion, and it is the second time I have spoken on a motion prepared by Mr Limbrick. I also believe it is in conjunction with those opposite, the Liberal Party, which is not a big surprise. We will not be supporting this motion. The committee has resolved that:

- under Standing Order 17.03 the Committee requests the attendance of the Premier, Hon. Jacinta Allan MP, to attend a public hearing at a date and time to be determined
- the Premier provide evidence in her capacity as the former Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery
- the Chair be empowered to inform the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council of this resolution and discuss the mechanism for the Council to consider a message to the Legislative Assembly requesting leave be granted for the Premier to appear

This is an exercise in pointscoring, and I am disappointed that the precious little time that we have to spend in Parliament sitting weeks is spent on motions like this and that they continue to be discussed.

When the Commonwealth Games needed a host city to step up at the last minute, we were willing to help, but \$6 billion to \$7 billion for a 12-day sporting event is too much. We will not apologise for being fiscally responsible and putting to good use every single tax dollar in this state. In the face of these extraordinary numbers, an unjustifiable cost-benefit analysis, we made the decision to not proceed before any major contracts had been signed, meaning costs incurred were relatively contained.

Going ahead with this event, the damages would have been far worse than if we had not. A better use of taxpayers money is the \$2 billion package to ensure regional Victoria still receives the housing, tourism and sporting infrastructure benefits that would have been facilitated by the games and more.

This speech is going to get into the Westminster system. It has been recognised that members hold immunities, privileges and other powers to represent their communities and their democratic constituencies as a result of their role as members of Parliament. This doctrine is known as exclusive cognisance. The independence of the houses of Parliament means that a committee cannot claim authority over a member of another house, and that member holds immunities based on this independence. There are a lot of other traditions in this place as well. The Usher of the Black Rod opens and closes the door of the Legislative Council. You need to rise when the President comes in. You address members politely – or at least you should – and address them by their title: the member for; the President or Acting President; the minister or Attorney, in the case of the Attorney-General; or Mr or Mrs or Ms, and more. It is part of the dignity of the office, and the traditions of this place and the other place go back a long time. As I said, they are formed from the Westminster system, which is supported by the views and practices of the British parliamentary system. This is public law 101. We have the concept of the separation of powers for a reason, and it is the cornerstone of our democracy.

The Premier has answered every question she has been asked about the Commonwealth Games, and I saw that yesterday in question time in the other place. Several public servants and officials have attended and provided information to this committee. The reality is simple: the Premier's attendance at this committee is not required, and those on this side of the house do not support this motion. Members of Parliament are responsible for their own houses – for the powers and the roles, their station and their functions. They should not be called before the other house in relation to those powers or functions.

From the beginning this has been a stunt. The opposition themselves aided and supported our decision to withdraw from the event and would have done so themselves. But it is all noise, because we have a mandate to deliver, including a strong mandate to deliver from regional and rural communities. It is why time and time again, year after year, election after election, as the new Premier herself knows from her election in a regional seat, rural and regional communities continue to turn to Labor to represent them. Let us look at the other places like the Bellarine and the beautiful peninsula that it represents, which Labor retained for a fantastic new member; and Bendigo West for the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, with a massive 64.6 per cent two-party preferred vote and a mammoth 46.5 per cent primary vote for Labor. Eureka, held by Ms Settle in the other place, was 57.2 per cent on a primary vote. Macedon, held by the Minister for Health in the other place, Minister Thomas, had almost 60 per cent of the two-party preferred vote. The member for South Barwon had a similarly high vote, and of course something that I am sure those opposite remember very well is the seat of Ripon, whose fantastic new member is the hardworking local member Martha Haylett in the other place – well done. Of course Premier Jacinta Allan almost had a majority in her own right, a 48.3 per cent primary vote and 60.8 per cent two-party preferred. Regional communities get that Victorian Labor delivers for them. This includes a \$2 billion regional package, which means a \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund that will see more than 1300 extra homes built across regional Victoria and \$550 million to deliver one of the permanent new and upgraded sporting infrastructure programs planned as part of the Commonwealth Games.

There is also \$150 million for the Regional Worker Accommodation Fund, which will provide grants for projects that will increase and supply workers accommodation in regional Victoria; a massive boost of \$150 million to regional tourism and events to ensure our regions have the best of everything on offer, with new events, new attractions and more accommodation; \$40 million for the all-abilities sport fund to remove the barriers to entry for people with a disability and help them get involved in sports through grants, scholarships and mentoring; \$60 million for the Regional Community Sport Development Fund for initiatives that will encourage regional Victorian families and children to be more physically active; \$20 million for regional tourism marketing to ensure our outstanding regional

offerings are marketed across the state, the country and the world; \$20 million towards a new Aboriginal economic development fund in recognition of the central contribution of traditional owners in planning for the games; \$10 million to extend the Tiny Towns program to support small but important projects that will deliver better public places and spaces and support civic pride; and of course \$25 million in general council support packages.

Housing is so important to my community of Southern Metro, and it is one of the big priorities of the Allan Labor government. With the new Regional Housing Fund, this is going to be delivered and delivered big time, including with more than 1300 additional homes across regional Victoria. One hundred per cent of those 1300 dwellings will be social and affordable housing, and the extra make-up between social and affordable will be determined through detailed planning and consultation, which is what our government does – detailed planning and work, doing the hard but diligent policy work day in, day out. These dwellings will be placed right across regional Victoria, where they are needed most. Without the games we do not need to place these houses under the restrictions provided by the Commonwealth Games Federation – for instance, new competition venues. So this side of the chamber is committed to working with councils, regional partnerships and locals to determine this right mix.

Regional Victoria will continue to be a destination that people want to visit, with all tourism regions hitting highs. Visitor spending in Phillip Island increased by 75 per cent, the High Country was up by 73 per cent and the Grampians has risen by 66 per cent since 2019. This is thanks to our government's work in this space. There is \$150 million in the Regional Events Fund to ensure regions have the best of everything on offer, with new events and attractions and more accommodation: \$47 million for regional events will help Visit Victoria bring the biggest and best events to our regions, bringing visitors and dollars to communities right across the state; \$78 million for regional tourism infrastructure to deliver projects to attract visitors to key destinations to support tourism businesses like wineries, breweries and distilleries and to add accommodation to their offerings; \$10 million to assist Victorian primary producers, to ensure that the rest of the world gets to experience our clean and green produce and to grow our food and fibre exports and encourage more Australians to buy Victorian; \$10 million for regional tourism industry development to ensure Victoria's regional cities and towns have the skills, workforce and capacity to support our regional tourism businesses to grow and thrive; and \$5 million for regional multicultural festivals to support towns across regional Victoria to hold multicultural festivals such as Tet and Chinese New Year. After all of this, it is clear who supports our regional and rural communities.

Joe McCracken (Western Victoria) (11:53): I just want to bring debate on this motion back with a bit more common sense than what we have heard from the government. This is basically asking for the house to support an invitation to the Premier to appear before an inquiry. It is like any invitation: someone can refuse an invitation if they wish. We are not compelling anyone to appear, we are asking them to appear. So let us just make that very clear: we are asking them to appear.

I have just got a few points that were raised before. I think it was Mr Berger that said that the Premier's presence is not required in front of this committee. I would have thought that at a committee that is investigating the Commonwealth Games and its cancellation you would want to talk to the person that was responsible for the delivery of the games, and at that point in time it was the now Premier Jacinta Allan. If you believed in ministerial responsibility, you would support this motion, because you would want the minister responsible at the time to be able to at least explain themselves, and that is what this is: it is an opportunity to explain the situation. If the now Premier wants to take up that opportunity, we would welcome that, because Victorians have many questions that need to be answered, and those questions can be gone through by the committee.

The attempts by the government to delegitimise this committee by saying that it is about political pointscoring are pretty poor, to be honest. I am very disappointed to hear them. It is not about political pointscoring; it is not an exercise in that. It is an exercise in accountability and integrity. If you value accountability and integrity, you will support this motion, because that is exactly what it is about. It is about getting honest, straightforward answers. That is all we want: honest, straightforward answers.

Mr Berger, I know you went through a number of the different electorates. It was like Antony Green; he went through the primary votes of the different electorates, particularly across my electorate of Western Victoria –

A member interjected.

Joe McCRACKEN: But that is exactly the point. The government made a promise at the last election that they would deliver a Commonwealth Games, and you pointed out that people voted for that. That is what you pointed out. But now, given that there has been a cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, it is not the Comm Games, it is the big con games. That is what people are feeling. That is what I have heard. You quite rightly pointed it out, but I wonder what would have happened at this point in time if they had had the knowledge that they were going to be cancelled – whether those votes you spoke about were going to be so high.

Nicholas McGowan: Where's Banjo?

Joe McCRACKEN: Good question, Mr McGowan. So let us just bring some common sense back to this. The motion says:

That this house requests –

it is not a compulsion, it is a request –

that the Legislative Assembly grant leave to the Premier ... to appear before the ...

committee. My community of Ballarat have a lot of questions to ask. Many other communities around the state do: Bendigo, Geelong, Shepparton, Morwell at the very minimum, as the regional hubs. But Victorians deserve straight answers on this, and they deserve those answers from someone who at that point in time had control. They were pulling the levers. Information was known at points in time. We at least deserve to have the opportunity to ask questions, and even further to that, we at least deserve the opportunity as a community, as a state, to ask the person who was in control at the time. Just invite them along. It is an opportunity for them to explain themselves. We are not telling them what to say, we are just affording them the ability to explain themselves, and it is so disappointing that we have already seen publicly that it appears as though that opportunity will not be taken up at all. It is just a chance for straight answers, and I do not know why the government tries to run this sort of protection racket. All we want is just to get clear responses.

Nicholas McGowan: Who's going to clean up the saleyards now?

Joe McCRACKEN: Good question, Mr McGowan. I do not know who is going to clean up the saleyards in Ballarat. It is a problem that has been ongoing for quite a significant period of time. There was hope that this would be resolved, but it seriously looks like there is less and less hope as time goes on.

I support this motion, and I really do take objection to the quite obvious attempts of the government to delegitimise this committee and the good work that it is doing in getting straight answers. And I note as well that the lead speaker for the government Mr McIntosh did indeed say that Mr Limbrick was doing a very good job with this committee, and I agree. He is doing a very good job. So, please, these attempts to delegitimise the committee must stop.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

*Members***Attorney-General***Absence*

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:01): Before we start question time I would like to inform the house that for the purposes of question time today I will be accepting questions for the portfolios of Attorney-General and emergency services for her consideration. I also wish to inform the house that there has been a minor change to the representing ministers document, which has been sent to the clerks this morning – the exact change being that Minister Tierney is now the representing minister for the environment portfolio.

*Questions without notice and ministers statements***Pharmacotherapy services**

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (12:01): (305) My question is for the Minister for Mental Health and is related to pharmacotherapy access. There have been several articles published this year and a whole special on the ABC 7.30 report focusing on the broken pharmacotherapy system in Victoria. As I have raised with the minister previously and Ms Payne brought up in question time yesterday, this system fragility came to a head with the temporary closure of the Frankston health clinic recently. I thank the minister's office for briefing me on what the government was doing in response to this, but it seems that the government's pop-up clinic solution has not been adequate to meet the need. I have heard stories of patients of the clinic relapsing and others who are still waiting to get a call-back for an appointment weeks later. My question for the minister is: how many patients were able to actually access pharmacotherapy services through the pop-up clinic?

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12:02): I thank Mr Limbrick for his important question. Of course opioid pharmacotherapies are a really important part of the range of different service options to treat those who are drug-dependent, and they do enable people who undertake that form of therapy to break the cycle of drug use and to re-engage with education, employment and, more generally, the community. So I do accept the premise of your question, Mr Limbrick, that these are really critical services. It is why we have taken steps to fund some of the gaps in the current system.

I think as I indicated to the house yesterday, GP services are the primary responsibility of the Commonwealth government under the Medicare system, but we know that there are gaps in the current system, and that is why we have been investing an additional \$10 million into the Victorian pharmacotherapy system through the 2023–24 budget allocation. That is to address that surge capacity and to address some of the things that I noted in my response to Ms Payne yesterday – that there is a shortage of specialist GPs in this area and we want to be able to take steps to increase the capacity across our GP network. We are funding a boost to the capacity of nine specialist pharmacotherapy clinics across Victoria and delivering additional staffing that would allow more than 360 more patients a year to receive care. In addition to that we are also pursuing a number of workforce initiatives, including new clinic placements for GPs, clinical supervision, education and mentoring across Victoria and an expanded case management coordination and liaison capacity, and of course increasing the number of nurse practitioners.

In terms of your specific question in relation to how many people have accessed the pop-up arrangements that were temporarily in place before the GP in Frankston reopened, I am very happy to see whether that data is available and provide that to you following question time today. As I did indicate to you – and I think my office followed up with your office – we are very happy to take any issues that you are encountering from the local community in the Frankston area and follow up with the department on any issues of concern.

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (12:05): I thank the minister for that offer, and I am sure we will take it up. On a related note, it is my understanding that the main prescribing doctor that went on leave and triggered this crisis is back now and seeing patients again, but it is also my understanding that he is going to take leave again in November, a matter of weeks away. That means we are only a few weeks away from the same problem that we had earlier this year. Does the minister have any additional plans for how the next gap, which we are going to see in November, will be managed, or are telehealth and pop-up clinics the best that we have got for pharmacotherapy clients?

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12:06): The department had already been assisting with the initial period of leave that that particular GP had taken, so I will ensure that there is close work happening if there is indeed, as you suggest, going to be another period of leave. It will be important to make sure that the community in Frankston has adequate service provision, and I will follow that up after question time.

Commonwealth Games

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:06): (306) My question is to the Minister for Housing. Minister, what briefings did you, as minister, receive from the Office of the Commonwealth Games in relation to the revision of budgets for the athletes village and therefore legacy housing?

The PRESIDENT: I am struggling with whether that comes under the ministerial responsibilities of Minister Shing currently.

Harriet Shing interjected.

David DAVIS: No, I am asking you. I just note that on 1 August 2023 Ms Shing said:

I am trying to assist here, Ms Crozier. I am really happy to provide the chamber with information and assistance around the Commonwealth Games ... legacy components ...

You are still the Minister for Housing.

The PRESIDENT: That did not help. Mr Davis, I will give you the opportunity to rephrase your question if you like.

David DAVIS: Have you received any briefings since the change of portfolios regarding the budgets that impact on housing?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:08): Have I received any briefings on the budget as it relates to housing?

Ingrid Stitt: Budgets.

Harriet SHING: Sorry. Thank you, Minister Stitt. I will take that point: budgets relating to housing. Well, the answer to that, Mr Davis, is that since taking the portfolio of housing I have received numerous briefings on the budgets as they relate to housing, as one would hope to be the case in relation to a portfolio where we have made a record investment into social housing across the state. In fact one of the first briefings that I got, Mr Davis, related to the \$5.3 billion invested in social housing across the state to make sure that this nation-leading reform in providing at least 12,000 social housing units around the state is delivered and to make sure that we are also providing housing within that allocation to assist with victim-survivors of family violence, to assist with people living with mental illness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and rural, regional and remote communities, as well as making sure of course – and you would be aware of this, Mr Davis – that we redevelop those 44 tower sites to make sure that on those sites we are not just delivering an uplift of 10 per cent in public and social housing but also modernising the places that people can call home so that they are accessible, so that they are bright, so that they are modern, so that they are energy-efficient and so that people are part of their communities.

Another budget briefing that I got, Mr Davis, related to the additional \$1 billion that is going into social housing across regional Victoria. That \$1 billion of additional investment is for at least 1300 units of social housing to be delivered in rural and regional Victoria. To that end, Mr Davis, that brings the total housing in the social housing portfolio, and my work as housing minister, to at least 13,300 units.

I also want to make sure, Mr Davis, that we are not giving you any false sense of conclusion on that, because my colleague Minister Tierney is also working alongside the housing portfolio to the tune of \$150 million in regional worker accommodation. This sits alongside the housing statement, Mr Davis, which you would also be aware has been discussed at length – those affordability partnerships, the reform to renters and tenants acts and opportunities, the way in which we are making sure that planning approvals are streamlined, the work that we are doing across precinct development. Mr Davis, there is a lot to be talking about here across budgets, and what it does do is far outstrip anything that you or your government or any government held by the coalition around Australia has ever delivered. I am always happy to keep talking about that as it relates to my housing portfolio.

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:11): Allen Garner, the former CEO of the Office of the Commonwealth Games, testified to the parliamentary committee that he briefed Minister Shing regularly. He said:

... we would look at villages and issues with villages, and the meeting might be about the planning issues or it might be about the scope or the number.

...

There were briefings in regard to the increasing costs.

But my question is different to that, and my question is: in those briefings that the minister has now referred to in her main answer, did any of those relate to legacy housing?

The PRESIDENT: I am a bit confused, but I will let the minister answer as she sees fit.

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:12): You are not the only one, President, who is slightly confused by the gymnastic pivot that Mr Davis has just attempted and failed somewhat miserably to land. Mr Davis, the work that we are doing within the regional package that we pivoted to immediately on 18 July is about delivering an additional \$1 billion for at least 1300 units of social housing in rural and regional Victoria.

Ministers statements: early childhood education

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Skills and TAFE, Minister for Regional Development) (12:12): This morning Minister Blandthorn and I visited the fabulous staff and children at the Gowrie early learning centre in Carlton to announce eight grants of more than \$6 million to support, develop and upskill early childhood educators. The government's Best Start, Best Life reform and the switch to 30 hours of kinder means that we will need an extra 11,000 early childhood educators in Victoria by 2032. The grants I announced today from the skills and TAFE portfolio aim to reduce the shortage of workers in early childhood through new approaches to recruitment, making it easier for people to access training, improving training facilities and upskilling the current workforce. Early childhood education is currently in the top five most popular free TAFE courses, but we know that there is much more that needs to be done to ensure more people are encouraged to take up this important career.

It was fantastic to hear from current trainees today who are employed by Gowrie and supported by the Early Learning Association Australia, a grant recipient. Both Jacob and Tilly spoke about the benefit of being able to apply their learning directly in classrooms that they are working in. Both had left the retail industry to pursue a career in early childhood development. The rapport that Tilly and Jacob had was on full display, and it was clear to see on the faces of the children that they interacted with.

The Allan government will continue to address shortages in early childhood education to ensure the rollout of more kinder for Victorian families. This government is ensuring quality training for this

important workforce, supporting the development of our youngest members of the community. Employment in early childhood education is not just a job, it is a skilled career – respected, professional and rewarding.

Commonwealth Games

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:14): (307) My question is again to Minister Shing. The Office of the Commonwealth Games testified to the parliamentary committee that it and DJSIR provided the minister with regular briefings from April 2023 onwards that included budget blowouts. Mr Garner told the parliamentary committee that:

Later Minister Shing, when she was appointed, was there. They varied – sometimes Minister Allan was not there and Minister Shing was there, sometimes they were both there and sometimes it was just Minister Shing.

I therefore ask: when the then minister claimed at PAEC on 8 June that \$2.6 billion would deliver the games and the legacy housing venues, by this point the athletes village alone had blown out by over \$1 billion.

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: If I accepted a question to the minister about something that she was associated with, it would be a bad precedent for me to set. Maybe, Mr Davis, do you want to try and rephrase?

David DAVIS: President, she did respond to the previous question and did put a great deal on the record about briefings on cost blowouts on housing.

The PRESIDENT: Her response was relevant to her current responsibilities as the Minister for Housing. I am happy for you to put a question to the Minister for Housing that relates to housing.

David DAVIS: But this was the Commonwealth Games and now it is Commonwealth Games housing, which she said she would answer.

The PRESIDENT: I am offering for you to rephrase.

David DAVIS: Within the briefings that the minister referred to in her first answer and in the context of these blowouts, at what point did she become aware of the massive –

Harriet Shing interjected.

David DAVIS: No, you have mentioned them. You talked about them.

Harriet Shing interjected.

David DAVIS: No, it was not a context. I just asked about briefings on that, but you indicated you had seen such briefings. So my question is –

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Mr Davis, could you start your rephrased question from the top, please.

David DAVIS: I therefore ask, in the context of the minister's answer to the previous question and the fact that she responded on briefings on blowouts on housing: when the then minister claimed at PAEC on 8 June that \$2.6 billion would deliver the games and the legacy housing and venues, she knew at that time it had blown out by over \$1 billion.

The PRESIDENT: It is all right to relate a question to the minister's previous answer, but her answer was around briefings around housing since she has been the Minister for Housing, not around the previous role that she had. I am ruling it out.

Water policy

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:18): (308) My question is to the Minister for Water. Minister, in the three years 2021–22, 2022–23 and 2023–24 the Andrews–Allan Labor government would have drained \$596 million minimum from Melbourne’s four water corporations in capital repatriation, effectively cycling water rates back to government in a nasty Labor water tax to mask the true extent of debt on the government’s balance sheet. Minister, you have been the minister through two of these tough financial years. Why have you allowed this nasty water tax to be levied on struggling households?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:19): Thanks, Mr Davis. Well, at last you have gotten a question right, so thank you for your new-found interest in water. It is actually really important to pick up on the preamble of what you have just said in your question, because it betrays a fundamental lack of understanding about the way in which capital repatriations operate but also the work that has been done to make sure that our water bills here have no equivalent in Australia for being lower. Our water bills in Victoria are the lowest water bills in Australia. By owning our water corporations we are really confident that they are running efficiently and providing affordable services, and they are also paying dividends. So Mr Davis, to that extent you have some semblance of an understanding about the way in which water corporations operate. But those dividends remain at a responsible level under the Allan Labor government, and they are a benefit of the state owning water corporations rather than what we have seen with private companies in the energy sector. You would know only too well about what happens with private companies in the energy sector, Mr Davis, and the fact that they do not in fact return benefit to the state.

What we are doing in a range of ways is making sure that dividends are at responsible levels, and they are generally determined using benchmark distribution payments: the government business enterprises of 65 per cent of pretax profit. As you would be aware, Mr Davis, and as I would hope you would be aware notwithstanding the preamble of your question, the payment of a dividend – and let us be really, really clear about this – does not result in increases to customer bills or reduced service outcomes for customers. Nor will it affect water corporations’ investments in capital projects. That is a really fundamental point, Mr Davis, because you seem to have missed it in asking your question about the impact that this would have on water bills. It does not increase customer bills, nor will it affect water corporations’ capacity to deliver investment in capital projects.

Mr Davis, it is a shame that when we talk about this you are too busy scaremongering and using misinformation to presumably launch some kind of narrative about the cost of living. I cannot be any clearer, Mr Davis: no increase to costs for consumers and no decrease in capacity for water corporations to invest in capital projects. But we also know that capital repatriations do not impact upon prices or –

Nicholas McGowan: On a point of order, President, the answer is required to be factual. The minister has stated that taking dividends out does not have any impact on prices, yet the minister would know very well that if you do not take the dividends out you have the capacity to lower prices, so that is not factual.

The PRESIDENT: That is not a point of order.

Harriet SHING: Thanks, Mr Davis. I am always happy to help educate you about how this system works.

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:23): I thank the minister for her answer, but she does appear to be confused about the difference between capital repatriations and dividends. My first question was entirely about capital repatriations – \$596 million – but because the minister in her answer referred to dividends not capital repatriations in the main, I am going to ask about dividends in total here. Over the same time period the government collected cash dividends from the four

metropolitan water authorities: \$306 million on top of the \$596 million water capital repatriations. Minister, that is a total of \$902 million, just short of \$1 billion, in that three-year period. Can struggling Melbourne household budgets afford your \$1 billion and growing water tax?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:24): Gee, I love a bit of mansplaining on a Wednesday afternoon, Mr Davis.

Georgie Crozier: On a point of order, President, the minister needs to retract that. That is unnecessary. It was a simple question that Mr Davis asked, and the minister has got no room to be carrying on like that in this chamber. Just answer the questions and stop being so patronising.

The PRESIDENT: I suppose to ask someone to retract I would have to ask Mr Davis to ask for that if he is offended.

David Davis: President, it is a comment that was directed at me when I was actually trying to provide assistance to the minister, who clearly did not understand the difference between capital repatriation and dividends.

The PRESIDENT: I ask Minister Shing to withdraw the comment, please.

Harriet SHING: Okay. Thank you, President. I do withdraw that.

Mr Davis, thank you for explaining at length the framework within which you are seeking to phrase this supplementary question. Again, I just want to be really clear: the ESC has been a very significant part of the work associated with dividends and capital repatriation. This is not new news to you, Mr Davis, and if it is then that shows a pretty significant gap in your understanding of the way in which the pricing work operates. We continue to have some of the lowest water bills in Australia, we continue to be able to support our metropolitan water authorities in the work that they do and we continue to be able to deliver low water bills and continue to invest in infrastructure. That work will go on no matter how much spin you try to put on it.

Ministers statements: Gabrielle Simmons ACM

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:26): I rise today to recognise the achievements of one of the many dedicated staff that work in our corrections system. I recently had the honour of attending Government House for the investiture of our newest Australian Corrections Medal recipients. The corrections medal recognises the efforts of staff who have provided distinguished service in their home state's corrections system.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to congratulate Gabrielle Simmons as she was awarded her medal by the Governor of Victoria. Gabrielle began her career in corrections in 2012 as an Aboriginal case manager in community corrections. She is now the manager of the Yilam unit, the dedicated team that provides culturally appropriate support to Aboriginal people in our corrections facilities. Recently Gabrielle has overseen the establishment of Australia's first dedicated Aboriginal healing unit at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. This innovative new program and facility will help Aboriginal women in custody turn their lives around. I look forward to updating the chamber about the Aboriginal healing unit in the future, but today I want to focus on Gabrielle. I had a fantastic conversation with Gabrielle, and her dedication and passion for the role were clear. Her reputation for showing sensitivity, dedication and empathy is well deserved in the sector. She is a leader in her community, providing support not just to those people in custody but also to family and loved ones on the outside. I want to again congratulate Gabrielle Simmons on being awarded the Australian Corrections Medal.

All our corrections staff are working hard in communities across Victoria to keep us all safe. They do remarkable work, often unseen by the community. Their work is not just about keeping us safe; it is also about helping people rehabilitate and reintegrate into our community. I thank each and every one of them for their commitment and dedication to making Victoria a better place for all of us.

Water policy

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (12:28): (309) My question is for the Minister for Water. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority recently commissioned and published a peer-reviewed report from the University of Adelaide. The report ranks the quality of studies used to justify water recovery policy in basin states. The report is particularly critical of studies that have been relied on by successive Victorian Labor water ministers to develop and defend Murray–Darling Basin policy. These include misleading studies that assume linear relationships between water extraction and farm production and ignore the negative socio-economic impacts of failing to recover environmental water. The University of Adelaide report found these studies to be of low quality and not fit for policy advice. In light of this, will the minister commission new studies?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:29): Thank you, Dr Mansfield, for that question. This is actually a really important area of policy in a very intricate policy space, and as you are very aware and as so many people in this area of policy interest and of managing the interests and priorities of a range of stakeholders are aware, there is a very long history around how we manage the return of water to our environments throughout the Murray–Darling Basin and various jurisdictions.

There has been, as you have quite rightly pointed out, a literature review written by a South Australian academic, and that literature review acknowledges that there is a socio-economic impact from the occurrence of water purchases. Under the 2012 agreement that was entered into by basin states there was an agreed and consensus approach that said that with the return of 2750 gigalitres to the environment over a period of time there could not be any additional water recovered that would cause harm to communities. That was enshrined in legislation in 2018 on the basis that there have to be positive or neutral outcomes in the way in which water is recovered.

You have cited a literature review from South Australia, and you have also indicated a range of things about the evidence put to Victorian communities around the impact of buybacks. We know all too well the impact of buybacks. Because of that 550 gigalitres that was taken out of the system, rural and regional communities suffered catastrophic job losses and suffered catastrophic decline in capacity to contribute. Across the Murray our communities in Victoria contribute the largest volume of dairy, of citrus and of horticulture. Chances are that when you are eating an orange or a mandarin or making a mojito or doing whatever people do with citrus, it has come from that part of the world. Chances are that when you are having dairy product and when you are actually enjoying a range of other things, whether they are tomatoes, eggplants or capsicums, they have come from that part of the world.

Food producers have never been more efficient in the way in which that output occurs – the way in which food producers get food to our tables. This is about making sure that we do more with less. Those efficiencies have been really hard fought for and hard won. They involve covering channels, modernising the way in which technology is deployed to water and –

Sarah Mansfield: On a point of order, President, the minister has not answered my question. It was a simple question: will she commission new studies, yes or no?

The PRESIDENT: I bring the minister back to the question.

Harriet SHING: When we talk about impact, that is well understood, including by colleagues on the other side of the chamber. I would in that sense direct you to the Frontier Economics report that was issued at the end of last year, which shows very, very clear deleterious impact from the consequences of buybacks. Again, that is a report that we stand by that is based on evidence provided to us here in Victoria.

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (12:32): I will take from that that the answer is no. Actually the University of Adelaide report makes it clear that both KPMG and Frontier Economics modelling that has been used by the Victorian government is of poor quality and unreliable. Your

predecessor Lisa Neville relied on this modelling to back up the government's stance on buybacks, and, Minister, you in response to my question without notice in August and again in the chamber last week to Mrs Broad and just now have cited this same modelling as evidence that buybacks do real harm. Minister, what assurances can you give the chamber that the evidence you are citing is of high enough quality to inform your water policies?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:33): We do not take decisions about an area so complex and so important as water lightly. This is about in fact the work that we have done to get to the highest level of compliance, of metering and of monitoring anywhere in Australia. This is about the fact that Victoria has returned more water to the environment than any other jurisdiction. It is about the fact that we know full well that returning 100 gigalitres to the environment, taking that out and actually entering into a process whereby that comes out of the consumptive pool will lead to, on modelling, around \$140 million of loss every year to Victorian communities. We know that in communities like Red Cliffs, for example, we will see a 76 per cent loss in jobs. This is about communities, and it is about the experience that we have lived through. Frontier Economics bases the work in metrics that are not there for fun. We are not taking these decisions lightly, and that work is something that we take very, very seriously indeed.

Water policy

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:34): (310) My question is again to Minister Shing as Minister for Water. I refer again to Melbourne's four water corporations – Melbourne Water, Greater Western Water, south-west water and Yarra Valley Water – for which you have responsibility. In 2021–22 total capital repatriations were \$209.9 million, up from \$84.9 million in 2018–19. Despite Yarra Valley Water not publishing forecasts of its capital repatriation in 2023–24, the capital repatriation payment is forecast to be at least \$173 million in 2023–24. I therefore ask, Minister: what is Yarra Valley Water's 2023–24 capital repatriation to be?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:35): Mr Davis, did you refer to 'south-west water' in that?

David Davis: I did.

Harriet SHING: There is no such thing as 'south-west water'.

David Davis: South East Water.

Harriet SHING: Okay, good – just to be clear. The 2023–24 forecast, and you would have seen this in the budget papers, BP 5, page 20, Mr Davis – and as I recall I was in fact asked this question by your colleague, in fact the department was, at the hearing that I attended – has dividend payments of \$101 million, followed by \$112 million in 2023–24.

David Davis: On a point of order, President, I have asked the minister about capital repatriations and she has given me an answer about dividends. She may be confused or it may be a simple error. She may want to answer about capital repatriations.

The PRESIDENT: I am never going to pretend to the chamber I have expertise in certain things that I do not have expertise in, so I have to take the minister's answer at face value.

David Davis: On a point of order, President, I did ask about capital repatriations and the minister has answered about dividends. It is a different thing. The government demands two sets of payments; she has answered about one. I know she may be a bit confused; that is fair enough.

The PRESIDENT: I do not think we need to confuse all of us. I think that at the end of question time if you believe the minister did not –

Harriet SHING: I can answer. As I have indicated, capital repatriations following dividends are determined by DTF. I do not have carriage of DTF's work. The 2023–24 capital repatriation will be set by the Treasurer and by that department, and that information is important to understand in the context of the work that I do alongside the Treasurer as it relates to dividends on the one hand within water and to the capital repatriation process on the other.

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:38): I note the minister has not understood the difference clearly until now, and it is good that she does, because we still do not have the figure for Yarra Valley Water. The so-called capital repatriations are on top of dividends and capital expenditure outlays. South East Water have reported that their overall debt levels and borrowings will increase over the forward estimates to service these payments to pay central government; that is what they have said. Minister, isn't it a fact that your water portfolio is being milked and Melbourne households will be bled to cover the massive Andrews government debt?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:38): Mr Davis, I always know from your increasingly florid language that you perhaps may not know the direction of your supplementaries, but what I am going to do is try to assist you here. The way in which this operates, as part of dividends and capital repatriations, is that there is no impact on the end cost to customers. The prices are set by the ESC, and there is no impact on the delivery of capital investments and projects. So, Mr Davis, try as you might to try to shoehorn your narrative into this situation, it does not follow. Capital repatriations and dividends do not affect customers' bills.

Ministers statements: LGBTIQ+ equality

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:39): I rise today in my capacity as Minister for Equality. Today is a day for us to stand alongside all members of our LGBTIQ+ communities to recognise, support, promote and indeed provide a sense of safety to people, including some of our most vulnerable cohorts. The bottom line is that here in Victoria equality is not negotiable. While some choose to spend their time fearmongering and spreading distressing and damaging misinformation, the Allan government continues to lead the way in policies and in funding that are about making sure that LGBTIQ+ folk around the state are safe, are dignified, are respected and are able to access services and programs that enable them to be visible and to be connected.

We have invested more than \$25 million in a Pride Centre, we are investing \$22.2 million to support LGBTIQ+ health services, we have banned conversion practices, we have improved birth certificate legislation, we have removed discriminatory provisions or challenges from the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 and we have embarked upon a range of programs, including access to adoption and to a range of other important freedoms and equalities before the law, that have undone some of the most challenging, awful and hate-filled history that we have. The former Premier Daniel Andrews stood in the other place and made an apology for historical convictions for homosexual activity.

It is too late for some, because too many people have died at the hands of systems that have been rooted in discrimination, in bigotry, in hatred, in isolation and in violence. We will continue to support LGBTIQ+ people every day here in Victoria. We will continue to press ahead with the importance of making sure that following a rise of transphobic and trans-related hate matters here in Victoria, we stand alongside trans and gender-diverse folk and we say: we are with you, we see you and we recognise you, and you are entitled to be safe and respected.

Housing

Joe McCRACKEN (Western Victoria) (12:42): (311) My question is also for Minister Shing. How many of the 1459 households on the priority access waitlist in the Ballarat region will actually be housed under the government's \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:42): Thank you, Mr McCracken, for that question. It is really great to be engaging with you on this and to be talking with you about the way in which housing can be delivered and should be delivered across regional Victoria. You and I share some very significant common ground around making sure that that issue, which is front of mind for so many communities across regional Victoria, is addressed. We have that additional announcement, as you quite rightly pointed out, of \$1 billion for at least 1300 social homes across regional and rural Victoria, and that builds on the investment of at least \$1.25 billion as part of the Big Housing Build, which is at least a quarter of the \$5.3 billion overall.

We have invested in a range of projects, and I am looking forward to returning to your part of the world in the next little while to see the further work that has been done. When I look at BADAC and the work that has been delivered there to provide housing for ageing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the community, it is about dignity and about providing spaces that are culturally safe and that are accessible. This work continues and will continue to make sure that the most vulnerable people across our communities get what they need.

The work around delivery of homes across regional Victoria continues to be developed by Homes Victoria. That is then done in partnership with community housing providers. It is also being developed alongside other businesses and industries and of course council, and they have been really significantly involved in the development of those strategies as well.

Joe McCracken: On a point of order, President, with the greatest of respect, my question was around how many of the 1459 households would be included on that list.

The PRESIDENT: The minister has been relevant to the question, and she has still got 1 minute and 19 seconds to address your concern.

Harriet SHING: Mr McCracken, I appreciate your desire to have a static answer now, but the essence of this work is that it is ongoing. I would like to see as many properties as possible brought online as soon as possible in a way that means that they are fit for purpose and accessible and that they are proximate to services and to amenity. I am talking with a range of people in this place, a range of people in the other place and people from across the political divide about what it is that they want and what it is that you want for your communities.

Just yesterday there was, I think, an adjournment matter from Ms Bath around access to housing for the Bass Coast shire and the Wonthaggi area. There are so many areas of need, and this is where priorities are developed in accordance with the housing register, the work of priority and assessment areas and the issues around need and what it means to connect and remain connected to, for example, specialist medical services and child care and schools and health care. We do want to make sure we get it right, though, Mr McCracken. That work continues every day, and as BADAC is one such example, there are others coming up in the next little while. I am looking forward to seeing you on the ground in Ballarat as that work continues.

Joe McCracken (Western Victoria) (12:45): I guess the short on that is I do not know how many, and it sounds like you do not either. Given that we heard last week from the EPA that permanent housing was never recommended for the former saleyards site in Ballarat, where will the housing be constructed in Ballarat?

Melina Bath interjected.

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:46): I am going to pick up your interjection there, Ms Bath – ‘Ongoing discussions with councils, ongoing consultative work’. I am just going to put that on the record because this is quite literally what is happening. We want to work alongside communities. We want to make sure that when and as social housing is developed it is delivered in areas and in ways that fit the needs of communities

now and into the future. We have a really significant projected growth in population, but we also have areas of significant socio-economic disadvantage and significant configurations –

Joe McCracken: On a point of order, President, with the greatest of respect, I have asked very specifically: if it is not at the Ballarat saleyards, then where is it going to be located?

The PRESIDENT: I think the minister was relevant to the question in saying there is ongoing work in identifying those locations, but I will let the minister continue.

Harriet SHING: Mr McCracken, again, we want to make sure that we are getting the housing to where it is needed. That is part of ongoing conversations. I know that is not a convenient answer for you, but for us to simply come to these outcomes without consultation would mean that we were not considering the views and priorities of communities, and we are determined to do exactly that.

Ministers statements: age of criminal responsibility

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:47): I rise to update the house on the progress in the development of an alternative service model to support raising the age of criminal responsibility. We announced in April this year that Victoria will be the first state to raise the age, and we will do so in two stages. The first will raise the age from 10 to 12 years by the end of 2024. Further reforms will raise the age to 14 years, with exceptions for certain serious crimes and subject to the development of an alternative service model.

To support this work the Allan Labor government has appointed an independent review panel made up of five experts. The panel's role will be to advise on the design, development and implementation of an alternative service model for children aged 12 and 13 years who come into contact with the criminal justice system. The panel will be chaired by Patricia Faulkner. Patricia has substantial public sector and community service delivery experience, including as a former secretary of Victoria's Department of Human Services, as deputy commissioner of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence and as chair of Jesuit Social Services. Other members of the panel are Andrew Crisp, who was until recently Victoria's emergency management commissioner and prior to that had a distinguished 40-year career with Victoria Police, including as regional operations deputy commissioner; Andrew Jackomos, a proud Yorta Yorta and Gunditjmara man, who was the inaugural commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people and special adviser to the government for Aboriginal self-determination; Father Joseph Caddy, who is vicar-general of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne and formerly was chief executive officer of CatholicCare – Father Joe has significant experience on government advisory boards and committees, with a focus on social policy and services, including prison ministry and youth justice; and finally Lisa Ward, who is the deputy chair of Victoria's Sentencing Advisory Council and director of the Victorian association for care and resettlement of offenders, and she has extensive advisory experience, including on the Adult Parole Board of Victoria, the women's correctional advisory council of Victoria and the child death review committee of Victoria.

The Allan Labor government is supporting children, young people and their families to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. Supporting at-risk children and their families, the alternative service model will consider a range of early interventions and rehabilitative supports in order to help children and young people grow up safe, connected and supported.

David Davis: On a point of order, President, before we move to constituency questions, did you want to deal with the issue of questions that were not answered, or are you going to do that at the end?

The PRESIDENT: If you have got a point of order, do it now.

David Davis: The first question I asked concerning water and capital repatriations – the initial question – was not answered. The minister answered about dividends.

The PRESIDENT: I am happy to review that, Mr Davis, and get back to you.

David Davis: Thank you. I think it was an innocent point, just answered about the wrong matter.

The PRESIDENT: I will review that and get back to the chamber. I believe the minister was responsive to the question at the time.

Constituency questions

Southern Metropolitan Region

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (12:51): (467) My question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. Can she provide an update on how the Allan Labor government is expanding renter protections for the many renters in the Southern Metropolitan Region? We know that across Victoria more people are renting than ever before, and for longer. In the last 10 years, the number of rental properties in our state has increased by more than 32 per cent, and demand is skyrocketing. We know the best thing we can do to make rental properties more affordable, just like all forms of housing, is to build more housing. Over the next decade we have committed to building 800,000 homes, and I have spoken before about what we are doing in the build-to-rent sector as well. We know that everyone has the right to safe, secure and affordable housing, whether they own it or not, and we are improving protections for renters. Portable rental bonds, banning rental bidding, a new disputes body, longer notice periods and mandatory training for property managers – under the Victorian Labor government renters will not be left out in the cold.

Western Victoria Region

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:52): (468) My constituency question is for the new Minister for Environment, who in what could be a positive development is now also Minister for Outdoor Recreation. This week the Game Management Authority began its annual survey of Victoria's game duck population. Experienced wildlife biologists examined duck populations across hundreds of water bodies, including wetlands, farm dams, rivers and streams. Satellite technology is used to assess the area of habitat available. These are experts using proven technology to produce accurate population projections. Adaptive harvest management then enables the continuation of sustainable duck hunting. Many of my constituents in Western Victoria Region participate in duck hunting, and facilities, clubs and communities rely on it. Minister, do you accept that the GMA's expertise can enable the continuation of sustainable hunting in Victoria, and how soon will you reject the prejudiced, partisan, anti-scientific and racially divisive recommendations of the recent parliamentary inquiry?

South-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Rachel PAYNE (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (12:53): (469) My constituency question is for the Minister for Local Government Minister Horne. My constituent is a resident of the Frankston local government area. Recently their council narrowly voted down a motion to remove the mandated Christian prayer at the start of the council meetings. My constituent aptly pointed out that the 2021 census data shows that more than half of the Frankston LGA do not identify as religious, and I am one of those constituents. Frankston council is in the process of developing a new safer community strategy, which is designed to promote a diverse, equal and tolerant community. A single-religion prayer sits in direct contradiction to the value pillars of that strategy. So my constituent asks: what encouragement has the minister provided to the Frankston LGA to adopt a secular or multifaith alternative, rather than imposing a single-faith prayer on its community?

Southern Metropolitan Region

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:54): (470) My constituency question is for the Minister for Small Business in the other place Minister Suleyman. What programs is the Allan Labor government providing to support small businesses? Over the weekend, the minister joined me at the Camberwell market in my community in Southern Metro, specifically in Hawthorn, where constituents continue to remind me that they dearly miss their former Labor member the hardworking

John Kennedy. We spoke to dozens of small business owners from right across the state. This includes Mr and Mrs Shaheen, who travel all the way from Greenvale every Sunday to sell flowers. Our government knows the value of investing in small businesses. We are investing \$17 million in our multicultural precincts, including delivering scholarships to help train and retain 500 staff members. These are practical solutions that will be tailored to the needs of the local communities. I know the minister is a passionate advocate for small business and supporting the locals of Victoria. I look forward to responses on this important matter for my community.

Northern Victoria Region

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (12:55): (471) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it concerns the current state of the C364 – New Dookie Road. Constituents have reported that the surface of the C364 between Shepparton and Dookie is littered with potholes and surface damage on both the eastbound and westbound lanes, which pose significant risks to the safety of all road users. Due to the state Labor government's neglect of regional roads, the condition of roads has deteriorated to a point where many roads are now unsafe. New Dookie Road is a major arterial road used by a significant amount of domestic and freight traffic daily, as well as being the major connector from the Shepparton industrial area to Doyles Road, known as the Shepparton Alternative Route. The government requires motorists to maintain their cars to a roadworthy standard, but this government is not delivering roads that are carworthy. Minister, will you order the immediate repair of the road surfaces on the C364 – New Dookie Road?

Southern Metropolitan Region

Katherine COPSEY (Southern Metropolitan) (12:56): (472) My question is to the Minister for Housing. Compared to social or community housing, public housing offers the greatest accountability to tenants. This is because when the government manages their homes, tenants generally know who is solely responsible for maintenance and complaints handling: the government. However, I have heard from community housing tenants in my constituency whose maintenance requests seem to either have been forgotten or ignored or take months and sometimes years to action, and often this happens with zero communication. Tenants appear confused as to who to turn to for support or what a third-party housing organisation's obligations are to them. Given these existing problems in community housing and your government's apparent decision to withdraw from providing any public housing by transitioning more people into community housing, how will you guarantee that my constituents will have greater accountability and clarity over maintenance, repairs and dispute resolution regarding their homes?

South-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (12:57): (473) My constituency question is for the Minister for Planning. I wish that the minister would actually advise me and my constituents as to why Casey – Casey council this is, where I live and have been living for the last 20 years with my family – has been ranked one of Melbourne's government areas with the least access to public library services despite having over 9000 residents under the age of 24, and that rates at about 35.7 per cent of Casey's population. Not having local library service access for schooling is a real concern, especially given that I have a genuine interest in education. There is currently none available to many, many people, and with a government Growing Suburbs Fund which has been slashed from \$50 million to \$10 million in the last state budget, it is an unacceptable situation. So we would like to know why.

South-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (12:58): (474) My constituency question today is for the Minister for Environment Minister Dimopoulos. Minister, what support is being provided for community organisations in the Rowville and the Berwick areas for conserving and restoring the natural landscape and towards programs to involve and educate young people in valuing and actively caring for Victoria's biodiversity and natural environment? I understand that \$4.4 million of grant

funding has already been awarded through the 2023 Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity grants alongside the 2023 Victorian Landcare grants. This funding supports volunteer organisations and their local communities as they safeguard and restore the local environment. The Junior Landcare and biodiversity grants help schools such as Park Ridge Primary School in Rowville, through their Indigenous revegetation garden program, to instil in the youngest generation an appreciation of, an interest in and a concern for our environment.

Eastern Victoria Region

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (12:59): (475) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education, and it relates to the student wellbeing program school fund, formerly known as the school chaplaincy program. Your department committed to announcing the 2024–27 successful providers and schools by the end of term 3; however, they are still in the dark. Minister, will you please announce funding continuity of the program, including all Eastern Victoria electorate schools, to provide certainty to principals, chaplains, student wellbeing officers and their wider school communities. We know that 600 schools have benefited from the program in the past – not only chaplains but student wellbeing officers, including 34 in Gippsland. Multiple reports clearly indicate the benefits of this. As a former teacher, I can attest that the school chaplain in my previous school was gold – and still is. This is important to assisting students moving forward with their mental health challenges – not only students but the whole school community.

North-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Aiv PUGLIELLI (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:00): (476) My question today is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and it relates to the recent plans that have been released for the North East Link toll road tunnel entrance in Watsonia. The community in Watsonia are gutted. They feel like their community is being cut in half by this huge toll road and that the connecting land bridges are insufficient and that they are inconvenient. People in Watsonia were hoping for a green bridge, not a grey trench. Will you listen to the wishes of the people of Watsonia and increase coverage over the trench with more green space and walking and cycling connections?

Northern Metropolitan Region

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (13:01): (477) My constituency question is directed towards the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. My electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region is one of Melbourne's fastest growing areas. More infrastructure is desperately needed, and traffic is an issue that is frequently raised by my constituents. While I am pleased to see work is underway on the Craigieburn Road duplication – which the government was dragged kicking and screaming to by former Liberal candidate and Hume councillor Jim Overend – which was significantly funded by the former federal coalition government, my constituents are very concerned about rumours of blowouts and delays. So can the minister please update my constituents on the funding allocated specifically to this upgrade, when he expects the project to be completed and how much he expects the project to cost.

Sitting suspended 1:02 pm until 2:06 pm.

Committees

Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid

Premier

Debate resumed.

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:06): I rise to speak on the motion put forward by Mr Limbrick today, which reads:

That this house requests that the Legislative Assembly grant leave to the Premier, the Honourable Jacinta Allan MP, to appear before the Legislative Council Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid to provide evidence in her capacity as the former Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery.

I do, in line with my colleagues Mr McIntosh and Mr Berger, rise to speak against this motion, though in doing so I wish to state from the outset my respect for Mr Limbrick as chair of this committee, of which I, like Mr McIntosh and like Ms Ermacora, also in the room on this side, am a member. Whilst I have some disagreements with how some things are progressing, as I will briefly discuss, I do wish to note that Mr Limbrick has been very, very ably chairing this committee, and we appreciate him for that.

I know that my colleagues have already talked about the doctrine of exclusive cognisance and various other matters. Members in this place well know that it is standing Westminster convention that both houses of Parliament are treated as independent of each other, and there is a very good reason for that. In fact being here in the Legislative Council, where the government does not, almost by design, enjoy a majority, I actually think that is a very good thing for our democracy.

Matthew Bach: Thanks, Bracksie.

Michael GALEA: Yes. Thanks, Bracksie, for that, as Dr Bach rightly interjected. It was a very good reform. It is important that we have all voices heard and that we do not have forgone conclusions in this house, so I very much appreciate that. It is in that spirit of independence of this chamber that I rise to speak against this motion today. As other speakers have noted as well, this is an inquiry that was established from a motion by the Liberal Party. They sought this committee. This is structured in the way in which they drafted it. If they had wanted a joint committee, they could have proposed that. They did not. They drafted a Legislative Council committee, and it is appropriate that, as others have already gone into detail on and as my colleague Mr Berger made reference to as well, again with those principles of exclusive cognisance, that is kept separate. I note that we have already had two hearings of the committee, both of which were last week, and we have two I believe scheduled for next week, including next Thursday, when I am looking forward to having Minister Harriet Shing appear before us and present to us, as will indeed the President of this place, both of them acting in their previous capacities as ministers for Commonwealth Games legacy.

We have had some contributions from across the chamber today as well, and I think a couple of them warrant responding to. Firstly, Mr McCracken has tried to frame this as being quite simple. He says that this is just an invitation; he says that you can refuse an invitation.

Mr McCracken knows all too well – I am sure he does; he is a member of the committee with me and with respect he is also our deputy chair – that the Premier has already been invited and has already respectfully declined.

Matthew Bach interjected.

Michael GALEA: It has been issued on the website:

... resolution on 9 October 2023 to request the attendance of Premier Hon. Jacinta Allan MP at a public hearing.

We have seen the public comments from the Premier, so we know what is happening here. And for Mr McCracken to say ‘Well, this is just an invitation. She can just decline it’ – we already know that has happened. So for this to be put forward today sounds to me an awful lot like political grandstanding and like you are trying to get her to decline in the way in which you want her to so that you can say it is a big deal. That is all that you are seeking to achieve.

I did enjoy listening to Mr McCracken's contribution. He talked extensively about ministerial responsibility. I do wonder: why has the select committee sought the attendance of a parliamentary secretary? They do not have ministerial responsibility. On the same page, on the same website of this committee:

The Committee agreed to this resolution on 13 October 2023 to request the attendance of Member for South Barwon, Darren Cheeseman MP at a public hearing.

He is not a minister.

Matthew Bach: Praise God!

Michael GALEA: Well, I actually think he will make a fantastic minister one day, Dr Bach, and I am looking forward to seeing the day when he is. Perhaps this committee is now taking it to a new level of absurdity. Perhaps we are now looking at future ministers. Perhaps we will look at what future ministers have to say about it. Is that what the plan is? Perhaps it is. You might know, Dr Bach. I might know, but I am on the committee so I cannot talk about what was discussed, as I know Ms Bath and Mr McCracken along with my colleagues here beside me Ms Ermacora and Mr McIntosh are. Perhaps that is the reason why we chose to do that as a committee. All I can say is in this house I do not think it is quite appropriate for us to be inviting a parliamentary secretary. I certainly cannot seem to find any precedent for it. I welcome members opposite showing me some precedent for where a parliamentary secretary has been called in front of a committee to answer questions relating to ministerial responsibilities that they do not have. By all means I look forward to that discussion, and I am sure we might have more productive conversations like that in our committee meetings.

Joe McCracken: On a point of order, Deputy President, as Mr Galea would well rightly know, the calling of a parliamentary secretary or a previous one is not what this motion is about, and I ask that he be drawn back to the motion.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Mr Galea, the motion is about the Premier attending, not about parliamentary secretaries attending, so I would draw your attention to the motion and draw you back to the motion at hand.

Michael GALEA: I will quickly veer off that, but just to emphasise the point that the reason why that is relevant is because it just goes to show –

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Sorry, Mr Galea, we are not going back to the parliamentary secretary. I asked you to bring yourself back to the motion, please, which is about the Premier.

Michael GALEA: Obviously they do not like me talking about it, so I will move on. I do note that Dr Mansfield made some interesting contributions as well. It seemed a bit not entirely on the subject as well, but it was going on to the role of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. And I believe she seemed to have suggested that PAEC had not been doing its job or something, and I know as a member of PAEC we certainly have been doing our job very thoroughly.

I also want to note she made a comment saying that government MPs were asking questions, and I would like to outline why the concept of proportionality when it comes to committees, whether it is a committee in the Council or a joint committee such as PAEC – like the Liberal Party could have pushed for if they wanted to actually compel the Premier to attend – is important. So there are five Labor members on the PAEC, and there are three coalition members and one Greens member as well, and if you actually look at the members of Parliament across both houses that is almost exactly proportionate to the numbers we have. In fact I think we have slightly less than proportionate Labor Party members on that committee, which is absolutely no problem. But I do think it is important to note that when you are saying those things you are actually calling for members to have a voice disproportionate to the representation in this place. And for what it is worth, as I say – and I say directly to you as well, Dr Bach – PAEC does do its job well when it comes to public scrutiny.

We have in fact heard members opposite, you included, Dr Bach, quote estimates hearings quite extensively this year. I know you were quite interested and engaged with, I believe it was, the education portfolio, which you took great joy in quoting from. If members opposite are going to join in in suggesting that it does not do its job or that it does not achieve anything in terms of accountability, why are they asking us so many questions based off answers in PAEC in this very chamber?

There was also an allegation of insufficient time to be able to probe deeply into matters that might arise. I will, for the benefit of the house, just note that this year at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's estimates hearings we undertook 58 hours of hearings, which was actually an increase of 40 minutes on the previous year. So I do not think you can say that there is not time given. With respect to Dr Mansfield as well, I believe she also mentioned that only ministers can be asked questions during PAEC.

Sarah Mansfield: That's not what I said.

Michael GALEA: I am glad to hear that is not what you said – I must have misheard that then – because members can ask questions of officials, just as they may of ministers as well. I think it is appropriate just to clarify some points in relation to that. Obviously the answering minister or official may, if there is an appropriate level of detail, defer to another official or minister, as may be the case, to answer a question. But certainly from my experience – 58 hours this year across all the various parts of government policy, including the Commonwealth Games, both legacy and delivery – that certainly was what we saw borne out in those hearings. My time is up, so I will conclude my remarks there.

Jacinta ERMACORA (Western Victoria) (14:17): Another week and another tired attempt from the opposition – I appreciate the motion. The government has moved on from the Commonwealth Games. Victorians have moved on, turning our attention to the far bigger challenges our state and nation face, and yet here we are again with the opposition continuing to grasp at quickly diminishing straws.

The idea of hosting the Commonwealth Games was a well-meant initiative. It was embarked on with the most positive of intentions, particularly as no other host in the Commonwealth put their hand up at the time. When it became clear that the 12-day event with the multitude of logistical challenges it posed would cost more than \$6 billion, more than twice the estimated economic benefit the games would bring to our state, the government made the decision not to proceed. It was the right decision. As then Premier Andrews said:

The main reason we agreed to host the Games was to deliver lasting benefits in housing, tourism and sporting infrastructure for regional Victoria.

But those outcomes can still be achieved without hosting the Commonwealth Games. In fact the government's prudent decision will mean even more rural and outer regional communities will benefit, and those benefits will be felt even longer. Take local sporting infrastructure: every single one of our permanent new and upgraded sporting infrastructure projects will still be delivered as planned by 2026. This means big and small investments right across Victoria will deliver modern facilities that communities can use for both elite and grassroots sports for many years to come – projects like the world-class mountain bike trails that will be built in and around Creswick and a new community sporting facility for Miners Rest, and I could go on. Rather than building temporary facilities for the games, it will instead mean that we get on with delivering these projects in their final form, benefiting locals sooner. A further \$60 million will back community and grassroots sports, delivering new playing fields, swimming pools, lighting upgrades, cycling paths and more. Importantly, these projects will extend well beyond those five major –

Matthew Bach: On a point of order, Deputy President, regarding relevance, Ms Ermacora's interesting thesis that the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games will actually be some sort of boon for regional Victoria is, as I say, of interest and note to me, but it has nothing whatsoever to do with the motion.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Ms Ermacora, it is a narrow motion inviting the Premier to attend. If you can tie your remarks to the reason why the Premier should or should not attend, that is fine, but I would bring you back to that narrow motion of the Premier attending –

Sonja Terpstra: Further to the point of order, Deputy President, I will make the point that I have been listening –

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Is this a separate point of order?

Sonja Terpstra: I have been listening to the debate, and this has been a broad-ranging debate. I have heard speakers from the opposition benches talking about things occurring in regional Victoria, and I think that, because the opposition has opened that door, Ms Ermacora is able to respond to it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I had actually already ruled on that point of order.

Jacinta ERMACORA: I will continue on the Commonwealth Games bid and the issues related to that which are referred to in the motion. Where was I before I was interrupted? Importantly, these projects will extend well beyond those five major regional centres, reaching and benefiting countless communities across our state, including my own. Paul Dillon, president of Hockey South West, which I have referred to previously in this chamber, put it recently:

I just think one door has closed and two doors have opened.

Because we know that athletes with a disability continue to face unacceptable barriers to participation, an additional \$40 million will help make competing fairer and more accessible, with dedicated support through grants, scholarships and mentoring. The same lasting benefits will be experienced with rural and regional tourism events. The new \$150 million Regional Tourism and Events Fund will strengthen our state's already strong tourism offering, attracting new visitors to regional Victoria – and critically, they are all important dollars. We value the impact of these kinds of investments in the south-west, and we are already extremely excited about an upcoming exhibition at the Warrnambool Art Gallery celebrating two exceptional female artists: Lisa Gorman, a local from Warrnambool, and Mirka Mora. For communities across our state, this fund will mean even more of these kinds of events, infrastructure and opportunities for economic growth. That benefit will not just be measured in days or weeks but enjoyed for years and even decades to come.

That lasting legacy will also be felt when it comes to regional housing. As I have noted before, there is no more urgent issue in our state than this one, and it is not a challenge that merely relates to Melbourne. In fact the further out you go, the harder it can be.

Matthew Bach: On a point of order, Deputy President, I do feel in some senses that I am being unkind to interrupt Ms Ermacora again. However, she is flouting your ruling, Deputy President. Her, again, interesting commentary regarding the many great things that will flow from the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games has nothing whatsoever to do with Mr Limbrick's motion. So my point of order is regarding relevance.

Sonja Terpstra: On the point of order, Deputy President, I draw the house's attention to the motion that was moved by Mr Limbrick in the sense that it does refer to the fact that there is an inquiry before the Legislative Council Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid and then it goes on to talk about the Premier in her capacity as Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery. Despite what Dr Bach is saying – and again I make the point that I have listened to the debate in this house – there have been a broad range of topics discussed in relation to the issues in the motion, and Ms Ermacora is entitled to reply to those remarks. I ask that she be allowed to continue without interruption.

Matthew Bach: Further to the point of order, Deputy President, I take the comments from Ms Terpstra. Ms Ermacora is not replying to anything. She has not made reference to any remarks of members of the opposition. In my time here it has been normal practice to allow some leeway to

members to respond to comments that have been made by others. However, Ms Ermacora is not responding to comments made by members of this house. She has not referred to any comments made by members on this side.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I am prepared to rule on this now, because I think that this is just going to go backwards and forwards across the chamber. I had ruled on the point of order earlier to say that this is a narrow motion. If the member can actually refer to some comments that were made and respond to those, that is fine, but the motion here before us is about the Premier appearing at the committee, not a general debate on the benefits that the regional games would have brought to regional Victoria or what benefits you think there may be in cancelling the games. So I bring you back to the motion, and if you want to respond to remarks, you need to refer to what those remarks were and then respond to them, please.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Can I ask how long I have got?

A member interjected.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Have I literally only got that amount of time? All right. Well, this decision was grounded in the best interests of our state. I will conclude by saying that, after all, courage and conviction are so clearly lacking under the current opposition leadership it makes sense that their caucus is struggling to recognise it when they see it. After all, they are being led by the man who attempted to conjure up fears about African gangs and then, when his strategy was spectacularly rejected –

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: This is not about an individual, and I ask you to withdraw those remarks, please.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Withdrawn.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:27): I rise to make a contribution on this motion moved by Mr Limbrick, motion 206 in his name. I am going to start my contribution by actually reading on the record what this motion actually says. I know I am going to get continuously interrupted by those opposite, so I am going to make the point before I begin my contribution so it is absolutely clear – I know you have got to leave because it is too hot, obviously, but I want to make the point that what I am going to say –

Melina Bath interjected.

Sonja TERPSTRA: I will start my contribution however I like, Ms Bath. Can I not have interruptions, thanks.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Ms Terpstra without assistance, please.

Melina Bath interjected.

Sonja TERPSTRA: I ask Ms Bath to withdraw that remark. I take offence to that remark, and I ask Ms Bath to withdraw.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Ms Terpstra, I am actually trying to speak, and you are speaking over me. It makes it very difficult for me to hear what the remarks are. But if there was an offensive remark made, I do ask the member to withdraw.

Melina Bath: ‘That is silly’ is not an offensive remark.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Given that we did not hear what the remarks were, Ms Terpstra, I would ask you to return to your contribution, and I ask that the other side allow Ms Terpstra to continue without assistance.

Sonja TERPSTRA: I reiterate my point that I take offence to the comment that was made by Ms Bath, and I note she has refused to withdraw it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Ms Bath did not refuse to withdraw it. The advice that I got from the clerk was that it was not offensive.

Sonja TERPSTRA: Deputy President, I refer to the standing orders, and they say, if I take offence to a remark, that is what is required, and I take offence to that remark.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I will refer it to the President for review.

Sonja TERPSTRA: Deputy President, thank you very much. Again, I am going to start my contribution, as I indicated I would, by talking about what is actually in this motion, and it says:

That this house requests that the Legislative Assembly grant leave to the Premier, the Honourable Jacinta Allan MP, to appear before the Legislative Council Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid –

so that is quite a broad application of what the committee is actually going to inquire into, which is the Commonwealth Games bid –

to provide evidence in her capacity as the former Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery.

I note that throughout this debate there has been broad-ranging debate on this side about a number of things that were allegedly contained in that bid.

There were a broad range of things that were taken into consideration in making that bid, and I understand that the committee wants to inquire into that and look for some answers, but the point is that you should look at what the state was actually trying to achieve. There was another nation that could not provide a venue for the Commonwealth Games, and Victoria actually said, ‘Well, we think we could run these games.’ As part of that bid, what was involved in it was that there would be the hosting of various events in regional areas. Various sporting events would be hosted in regional areas, and as part of that, commitments were made around infrastructure, which went to the legacy of it. That meant that we needed to develop and build infrastructure so that we could conduct these games, and then an excellent part of that would have been that in those regional communities, where these sports were going to be hosted, they would then have been able to enjoy the benefits associated with the running of those games, and those benefits were many and varied.

I will just talk for a moment about the regional package of works that were included as part of that bid. This again goes to the motion on the Commonwealth Games bid. These things were made public, and commitments were made about these sorts of things. Our \$2 billion regional package included a new \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund that would see more than 1300 extra homes built across regional Victoria. This was about supporting the athletes who were going to come here, who would need accommodation and who were going to compete in the Commonwealth Games. So I am making it very clear, and I am being very consistent in my contribution here. This applies to the Commonwealth Games bid and the delivery of it, okay? So that was one aspect.

There is \$550 million to deliver every one of the permanent, new and upgraded sporting infrastructure projects planned as part of the games – that is directly relevant to the bid – and \$150 million for the Regional Worker Accommodation Fund to provide grants for projects that will increase the supply of workers accommodation in regional Victoria. We know that it is critically important in regional Victoria that people who come here to work actually have somewhere to live or to stay – so that they could work on these games. That was the intent, but the legacy of it would have been that there would then have been infrastructure that would have benefited regional Victorians. That seems to be a bad thing. It seems to be a bad and evil thing for those opposite.

There is so much more – \$150 million for a regional tourism and events fund to ensure our regions have the best of everything, with new events, new attractions and more accommodation. We want to

continue to attract people to the regions. This was all part of the bid, thank you very much. There is \$40 million for the all-abilities sports fund to remove the barriers to entry for people with disability.

Joe McCracken: On a point of order, Deputy President, I say this with the greatest of respect, but a substantive part of this motion is about the invitation to the former minister, now Premier, to come before the Commonwealth Games bid inquiry. I realise that it does say that in the motion, but the thrust of the motion is not about the bid; it is about a former minister coming before the committee and talking about it. That is what the substantive part of the motion is about.

Sonja TERPSTRA: On the point of order, Deputy President, I need to be able to continue my contribution in silence and without interruption, because I am going to get to how all of these things may be matters that the committee might inquire into, but I am continually interrupted by those opposite.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! That is not a point of order. I will draw the attention of the member back to the substantive part of this motion, which is about the Premier giving evidence on the Commonwealth Games bid. I do believe that some of the things that you have been raising are not actually part of the bid but part of the compensation package for not having the games, but I draw you back to the fact that this is about the Premier appearing before the committee, and I ask you to come back to the motion, please.

Michael Galea: On a point of order, Deputy President, I will note, just for the record, that the name of the committee is the Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid; however, the terms of reference explicitly include the regional building program.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I am sorry, Mr Galea, this is not about the terms of reference, this is about the actual motion, which is a very narrow motion about the minister appearing before a committee that is called the Legislative Council Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid. It is not about the bid itself, it is about the Premier appearing before that committee, so I do draw the member back to the motion, please.

Sonja TERPSTRA: I find it very interesting, the interpretation of those opposite on this particular motion. I will actually talk about the motion. I find it really, really interesting that what is really being advocated by those opposite is to split this motion – not to read it as a whole, but to split it up – to say, ‘This is about the Premier giving evidence to this inquiry, yes,’ but then we cannot talk about the actual bid, which is the subject of the inquiry, which you are asking the Premier to actually give evidence on. I find that a nonsensical point made by those opposite. I make the point in this house as part of this debate that the terms of reference are relevant to how the inquiry is going to conduct its business in looking into the motion that set this up. You cannot split it apart. It is a nonsense – and that it is fine. Obviously the approach by those opposite and the strategy and the tactic is to interrupt every government speaker who is trying to make a contribution on this motion. It is patently obvious and very boring, might I add, because you have got no alternatives to this.

I will continue on in the 43 seconds that I have got to talk about this motion. I note that when the opposition speakers were speaking there was not the same level of interruption by government members on these benches to people on the opposition benches. Again, it is just ridiculous and true to type, true to form by those opposite – they do not want to listen to anything that is being said by government members. Again, they want to keep splitting this motion into finite detail that would then render this unworkable. In the 13 seconds that I have left on the clock I will continue on to say that I look forward to the inquiry that is being conducted by the Legislative Council select committee on this because I – *(Time expired)*

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (14:37): I am very pleased to rise and speak as part of the debate on Mr Limbrick’s motion, which attempts to make a request that by its very essence strikes at some of the core principles of how parliaments in the Westminster tradition have operated for centuries. Perhaps indicative of the opposition’s approach to the conduct of speeches by

government members in the course of this debate is the extent to which this entire process is one of farce. The way in which those opposite listened to the contributions that my colleagues on this side of the chamber have attempted to make today, not on a motion that the government has brought before the chamber but on a motion that has been brought by non-government members – they are not interested in listening to the contributions that we want to make in the course of this debate. The continual objections that they are making demonstrate 100 per cent that they have actually got no interest in anything that we are going to say, because we all know that this is an abject exercise in political pointscore. They are not interested in listening to what is going on, what has gone on and what anyone has got to say. Therefore a motion that seeks to bring a request to a member of the other chamber to appear before a committee should be treated in the same vein. We cannot take seriously this motion because they are not taking seriously the questions that are before us and the contributions that are –

David Limbrick: On a point of order, Deputy President, the motion was brought forward by me, not the opposition, and I am listening very carefully.

Michael Galea: On the point of order, Deputy President, I believe Mr Batchelor was referring to the contributions of opposition members in this debate.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I would remind Mr Batchelor that the motion is Mr Limbrick's motion and Mr Limbrick has been listening here intently. You would need to make it clear as to who your statements are intended for.

Ryan BATCHELOR: I am fully aware of who moved this motion, and I think I was referring to non-government members having moved this motion. I think, last time I checked, Mr Limbrick falls within the category of non-government members. However, if there warrants yet a further demonstration of the disinterest in the content, the practice is demonstrating that.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Sorry, Mr Batchelor. Just given that you have now said that you are saying that non-government members are disinterested, I think that Mr Limbrick's point of order is quite pertinent in that he has been sitting there quietly listening very intently to the debate, so I understand why he feels aggrieved. I just bring you back to the motion.

Ryan BATCHELOR: I am very happy to get back to the motion, because as I said at the outset, it is a motion that seeks to disregard centuries of parliamentary practice. It seeks to undermine the very notion of the relationship between the houses of Parliament that has existed in the Westminster tradition for centuries, and if those opposite – and I use that term generally, not specifically – in either moving or speaking to this motion do not wish to have regard for those centuries of tradition, then we on this side will. That is why we are opposing this motion today, because we do not believe that it is the right course of action to up-end these centuries of Westminster practice by saying that members of the other place should be held accountable to this place, because that is not how our Parliament works. I think it is beholden on all of us, whether we have been here 5 minutes or longer, to continually respect the operations of the Parliament.

It is very clear in that tradition that members of this chamber cannot impinge on the immunities and privileges that are held by a member of the other chamber. Each of us is responsible in this place to this chamber, and each of those in the other place are responsible there. It may be inconvenient for the purposes of various committees, as they exercise their functions from time to time, that a particular minister who they wish to question is not from that particular chamber, but there are constraints bigger than us that dictate the composition of the executive government here in Victoria. Such matters are indeed features of our constitutional framework, and so it is the very basis of our system of government here in Victoria, where the number of ministers permitted to sit in this chamber is limited. If people do not understand our constitutional framework, it is very easy to go and look it up. What that says to us is that it is very clear within the confines of the way our constitution operates, and its very text, that there are going to be times when ministers are not members of this place, and that is the way our

democracy has operated for a very long time. Just because those non-government members opposite want to go on a political pointscoring exercise does not mean we have the right to up-end the constitutional framework and does not mean we have the right to turn our back on centuries of practice and tradition and precedent in our Parliament, which say that members of the other place are not accountable to this place.

Because we do obtain this part of our constitutional heritage from parliamentary practice in the United Kingdom, it is relevant to read from the *Precedents of Proceedings in the House of Commons* in this regard, which says:

The leading principle, which appears to pervade all the proceedings between the two Houses of Parliament, is, That there shall subsist a perfect equality with respect to each other; and that they shall be, in every respect, totally independent one of the other.—From hence it is, that neither House can claim, much less exercise, any authority over a Member of the other ...

And in a similar vein, to quote again from the *Precedents of Proceedings in the House of Commons*:

As it is essential to the House of Commons, to keep itself entirely independent of any authority which the Lords might claim to exercise over the House itself or any of the Members, they ought to be particularly careful, on this and on all similar occasions, to observe and abide by the practice of their predecessors.

I think it is pretty clear, from precedent and from practice, that seeking to extend the reach of this place to the other place is not something that accords with the operation of our parliamentary democracy. I think it is very clear, from the text of the Victorian constitution and the framework for executive government and the constitutional arrangements with respect to from where and how many ministers are able to be drawn from each house of Parliament, that there are going to be circumstances where it is not possible for a committee of this place to compel a minister from the other place to appear before it. Seeking to subvert that by moving motions such as this does nothing to respect the way parliamentary democracy in this state and in the Westminster tradition works.

In the context of this debate and the contributions that we are making, I frankly have not had time to talk about the range of other matters that other members in this debate have so eloquently attempted to convey, despite some attempts to frustrate some of those contributions. What we do know is that the motion itself here is seeking to undermine a very core principle of our parliamentary democracy, and we should not support it.

Adem SOMYUREK (Northern Metropolitan) (14:47): I rise to speak to the motion before the house. I have been in this place for 21 years, and invariably it is the opposition that campaign for accountability and transparency, and then when they get into government they are anything but accountable and transparent. I have seen this debate ad nauseam, many times over 21 years, be it exclusive cognisance or be it a request for papers to be supplied to the upper house. In 2014–18 we as the Andrews opposition campaigned hard on accountability and transparency, and what you got through the Andrews government was anything but accountability and transparency – through Daniel Andrews on his own, by the way, and the way he did government himself.

This house cannot compel the Premier to attend. I have seen this throughout my parliamentary life. This house cannot compel the Premier to attend an upper house committee – that is just fact. But just because the upper house cannot compel the Premier to attend, I would actually encourage her to attend, because I think it is in her best interests to attend. I would argue that turning up to the inquiry and accounting for the very costly botched Commonwealth Games bid is in Jacinta's best interests. I would argue that one of the reasons Daniel Andrews was so loathed by his detractors was because of the lack of accountability, lack of transparency, lack of collective decision-making and lack of respect for due process. Because of the sandwich – I preface that with a word starting with 'S' at the start of it – that Dan left Jacinta Allan, Jacinta Allan's premiership has not got off to the best start. There are sections within the community that see, unfairly, Jacinta Allan as just another Dan Andrews, or the female form of Daniel Andrews, and I think that is a little bit harsh. So my message to Jacinta Allan is to actually take this opportunity to press the reset button on her premiership. By turning up to the

committee you will send a very powerful message to the Victorian community that you are not just a female version of Daniel Andrews, that you are willing to be held to account and that you will be transparent in the way you run the Victorian government.

The Commonwealth Games bid was a fiasco. I do not think anybody is going to defend that. It made Victoria the laughing stock of the world. Why? Because of the way Daniel Andrews ran his government. There are various conspiracy theories around everything – every stuff-up – under Daniel Andrews, from the hotel quarantine to every other stuff-up. I recall the various conspiracies around the hotel quarantine. I am not going to verbalise them now; it is not fair. But there certainly is a conspiracy theory associated with the botched Commonwealth Games bid, and that is that Daniel Andrews designed the system – the whole bid was a ruse to misappropriate taxpayer funds to pork-barrel to regional seats with the promise of attracting tourist revenue into those seats as well.

Ryan Batchelor: On a point of order, Deputy President, I am not sure the member is being relevant to the motion.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I think that Mr Batchelor has a point. Mr Somyurek may have just drifted off to talk about the former Premier when this is about the current Premier appearing before a committee. I draw Mr Somyurek back to the motion, please.

Adem SOMYUREK: Yes, Deputy President. I think it is in Ms Allan's best interest to appear before this committee and to be forthright in her evidence. No doubt she will be if she appears. If she has to tell the truth and if the truth means throwing the former Premier under a bus, she needs to do it. The former Premier threw 10 women colleagues under a bus. He did not blink an eyelid. If the Premier was in her position, he would be –

Ryan Batchelor: On a point of order, Deputy President –

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: It is all right. I am just going to pick Mr Somyurek up on it. This is not about the former Premier and what he did or what he did not do; it is about the current Premier appearing before the committee. I do think that you are drifting off into other territory that is not relevant to this motion. I draw the member back to the motion, please.

Adem SOMYUREK: What I am saying is highly relevant. Since the government has argued that the Premier cannot be compelled to appear as a witness, what I am doing is putting up an argument as to why it is in her best interests to appear voluntarily before the committee. Whether we like it or not, the Premier only left three weeks ago and the Commonwealth Games was a project under his watch. So I contend that what I am saying is entirely germane to the topic before the house.

My point to Jacinta Allan is that she needs to appear. She will do a good job in the committee. She is very fluent in speech. She is a good performer. She has got a massive corporate memory, and I think she will do a good job – much better than what people think. So I think that her appearing before the committee can only be good for her. It is a chance to hit the reset button on her premiership, and I think it will be good for the Victorian people to see that their new Premier is willing to be held to account and respects the institution of Parliament and the accountability mechanisms of Parliament.

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:54): I would like to thank all members for their contributions to this important debate today. I would just like to take up a couple of points. Mr Galea and Mr Batchelor spoke at length about the concept of exclusive cognisance. If my motion had been attempting to compel the Premier, I would agree. That would be breaching exclusive cognisance, because I would be attempting to exercise power over another house. However, this motion is not doing that. It is an invitation to voluntarily appear before the committee. I am disappointed that the implication is that the Premier would only appear if she was compelled and would not voluntarily provide accountability to the Victorian public. I hope that if this motion passes and the Premier receives this invitation, she will take it up, because I agree with Mr Somyurek – maybe it is a chance to push the reset button.

There was a comment by Mr McIntosh about this being a stunt. I can assure him – and as the Labor members of the committee will know – I take this deadly seriously. This committee has a role to get to the bottom of what went on during this bid and also the subsequent regional infrastructure rollout, and that is absolutely my intention. I do not want to be in a position where I find that as chair of the committee I cannot fulfil this role and would be forced to resign. I do not want to end up in that position.

Also, Mr McIntosh and Mr Berger spoke about how the government made the decision to cancel the games because it was going to cost \$6 billion or \$7 billion. I supported the government's decision. I think they made the right decision in cancelling the games. What I am concerned about is the decision to go ahead with the games in the first place, which resulted in \$500 million plus – we still do not know the actual number but at least half a billion dollars – being wasted, and I think that the Victorian taxpayers absolutely deserve to get some answers on that. Half a billion dollars – this is a serious amount of money.

Ms Ermacora and Ms Terpstra spoke about the benefits of the regional rollout. Maybe if the Premier voluntarily appeared, she could tell us herself about some of those benefits. I do not know why the Premier would be afraid of appearing before a committee. I am sure that the Labor MPs on the committee would be able to tell her that I do my best to be fair on this. Nevertheless, hopefully this will pass, and if it does pass, I hope that the Premier will reconsider her public statement when she said she would not appear before the committee and will voluntarily appear in order to provide accountability for the Victorian public.

Council divided on motion:

Ayes (20): Matthew Bach, Melina Bath, Katherine Copsey, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, David Limbrick, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Sarah Mansfield, Bev McArthur, Joe McCracken, Nicholas McGowan, Evan Mulholland, Aiv Puglielli, Samantha Ratnam, Adem Somyurek, Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell

Noes (17): Ryan Batchelor, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Enver Erdogan, Jacinta Ermacora, David Ettershank, Michael Galea, Shaun Leane, Tom McIntosh, Rachel Payne, Georgie Purcell, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Sheena Watt

Motion agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: A message will be sent to the Assembly noting the passing of this motion.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

Joe McCracken (Western Victoria) (15:04): I move:

That the consideration of notices of motion, general business, 207, 212 and 152, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

Legal and Social Issues Committee

Reference

Moira DEEMING (Western Metropolitan) (15:04): I move notice of motion 124:

That this house:

- (1) recognises that medical affirmation of gender-dysphoric children and adolescents is currently one of the most controversial areas of medicine due to the lack of clinical consensus about what is being treated, the diagnostic process, whether a diagnosis is required, the asserted benefits, risks and outcomes of the medical pathway and the alternative pathways which exist;

- (2) notes that despite international medical and legislative moves to restrict the medical affirmation treatment pathway for gender-dysphoric minors, which involves the three stages of puberty blockade, cross-sex hormones and surgery, it remains the dominant pathway in Victoria;
- (3) further notes that the legislation governing gender-dysphoric children and adolescents in Victoria impacts the rights of children, parents and professionals;
- (4) requires the Legal and Social Issues Committee to inquire into, consider and report, within 12 months of the house agreeing to this resolution, on the appropriateness of medical affirmation treatment pathways for gender-dysphoric children and adolescents in Victoria, including but not limited to:
 - (a) the lack of clinical consensus about what gender dysphoria is and how it is treated, including:
 - (i) the diagnostic process;
 - (ii) whether a diagnosis is required;
 - (iii) the asserted benefits, risks and outcomes of the medical pathway;
 - (iv) the impact of social gender affirmation on rates of medical gender affirmation;
 - (v) the alternative pathways which exist;
 - (b) the impact and operation of legislation governing this issue, including:
 - (i) the rights of minors to access evidence-based care;
 - (ii) the rights of parents; and
 - (iii) the rights of professionals.

I am very pleased to be standing here today to call for this inquiry. I have been watching with many other people all around the world for the last 10 years the incredible rise in the rates of gender dysphoria amongst youth all around the world, and like everybody else I have been very, very concerned for their welfare. Now, after years and years of collecting evidence, there is growing international concern over the proliferation of medicalised gender-affirmation interventions on minors which have been shown to have extremely low certainty of benefits and extremely high significant potential for medical harm. In fact following systematic reviews of evidence conducted in Europe, the UK and elsewhere, many countries, health authorities and insurance companies have reversed their endorsement of the affirmation model that we use in Victoria and are treating youth presenting with gender dysphoria with supportive counselling rather than puberty blockers, hormones and surgery.

Before I finish, I would just like to talk about some frequently made accusations, rather than frequently asked questions. Other jurisdictions have called for inquiries and have had the following accusations made: firstly, that an inquiry risks creating stress that could ultimately cause vulnerable young Australians with gender dysphoria to commit suicide. Now, I do not know if these types of comments were made for the purposes of emotional blackmail or out of genuine concern, but the answer is simple. It is an undisputed fact that the medicalised gender-affirmation practices which have been mandated in Victoria have been abandoned in multiple jurisdictions all around the world, and that is because of two simple reasons: the lack of high-quality and long-term evidence that they actually deliver the promised benefits and the mounting international evidence that real harm is already being done to children that is long term, that is catastrophic and that is irreversible. We need to take every precaution to ensure that any inquiry and any public debate that surrounds it is framed in compassionate and measured language to reduce the risk of that distress to these vulnerable children. But make no mistake: an inquiry is needed because children are already being harmed.

Keira Bell, one of many girls who enjoyed life as a tomboy before puberty, says of her experience of being medically transitioned as a minor:

A lot of teenagers, especially girls, have a hard time with puberty, but I didn't know this. I thought I was the only one who hated how my hips and breasts were growing.

...

As I look back, I see how everything led me to conclude it would be best if I stopped becoming a woman. My thinking was that, if I took hormones, I'd grow taller and wouldn't look much different from biological men.

...

... I was adamant that I needed to transition. It was the kind of brash assertion that's typical of teenagers. What was really going on was that I was a girl insecure in my body who had experienced parental abandonment, felt alienated from my peers, suffered from anxiety and depression, and struggled with my sexual orientation ...

as a lesbian.

We are told these days that when someone presents with gender dysphoria, this reflects a person's "real" or "true" self, that the desire to change genders is set. But this was not the case for me. As I matured, I recognized that gender dysphoria was a symptom of my overall misery, not its cause.

...

The consequences of what happened to me have been profound: possible infertility, loss of my breasts and inability to breastfeed, atrophied genitals, a permanently changed voice, facial hair. When I was seen at the Tavistock clinic, I had so many issues that it was comforting to think I really had only one that needed solving: I was a male in a female body. But it was the job of the professionals to consider all my co-morbidities, not just to affirm my naïve hope that everything could be solved with hormones and surgery.

Then there is Chloe Cole from America. She said:

At the age of 12, I began to experience what my medical team would later diagnose as gender dysphoria.

I was well into an early puberty, and I was very uncomfortable with the changes that were happening to my body. I was intimidated by male attention.

And when I told my parents that I felt like a boy, in retrospect, all I meant was that I hated puberty, that I wanted this newfound sexual tension to go away.

Her parents were asked by the doctors:

Would you rather have a dead daughter or a living transgender son?

The choice was enough for my parents to let their guard down, and in retrospect, I can't blame them.

This is the moment that we all became victims of so-called gender-affirming care.

I was fast-tracked onto puberty blockers and then testosterone.

...

I had a double mastectomy at 15.

...

After my breasts were taken away from me, the tissue was incinerated – before I was able to legally drive.

I had a huge part of my future womanhood taken from me.

I will never be able to breastfeed.

I struggle to look at myself in the mirror at times.

I still struggle to this day with sexual dysfunction.

...

When my specialists first told my parents they could have a dead daughter or a live transgender son, I wasn't suicidal.

I was a happy child who struggled because she was different.

However at 16, after my surgery, I did become suicidal.

I'm doing better now, but my parents almost got the dead daughter promised to them by my doctors.

My doctor had almost created the very nightmare they said they were trying to avoid.

Another frequently made accusation is that calling for this inquiry is part of some kind of Trumpian, far-right, anti-trans, hateful agenda rather than being about the wellbeing of children. Not that this type of pathetic, bigoted, self-serving, dogmatic nonsense even deserves a response, but the fact is that

medical and legal professionals from all over the world and members of the LGB, and yes, even the T community from all over the world have joined their voices with MPs from the left and the right of politics all over the world to call, like me, for an inquiry just like this. That should give even the most narcissistic and arrogant opponent of my motion reason to pause and humbly ask themselves whether they should vote in favour of this motion to make entirely sure that they have not made a mistake. Because it is not political pointscoreing that is at stake; it is the health and wellbeing of children and young people. I say that everyone should put aside their politics on this issue and do what is clearly and obviously the right thing to do, which is to support my motion, because if I am wrong, you can all gloat that I am wrong. But if you are wrong, none of us will be gloating and we will all be very, very sad, because children will have been, and will continue to be, harmed under our watch. I hope that that is an unacceptable scenario for every single person in this chamber.

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (15:13): This is a motion which, in contradistinction to perhaps the way in which Mrs Deeming has characterised it, is about so much more than politics. This is an issue which for so many people who are the subject of it is deeply, deeply personal. This is an inquiry which goes right to the heart of trans and gender-diverse identity. In saying that and in getting to my feet today not only as Minister for Equality but also as a proud member of our LGBTIQ+ communities, I want to acknowledge that this is a debate which, despite what anyone else may say, may well cause distress or hurt or pain for a variety of different reasons. There are a number of services available to assist people with the subject matter of this debate. Tragically, these are services which have had to be developed because the world in which we live treats the idea of trans and gender-diverse people as a problem.

We face a series of challenges around the way in which communities and governments and elected representatives reflect and give validation to the identities of trans and gender-diverse folk. But the starting point is not the rise in requests for gender-affirming health care or surgery or application of the Gillick principle or case law such as that in *Bell*, which Mrs Deeming referred to, as overturned by the Court of Appeal. It lies in the question of stigma, of discrimination, of the idea that LGBTIQ+ folk are other.

We know this only too well. We know this from the day that we first recognise that we do not quite fit in with the way the world defines sex, gender and identity. We know this in ways that are increasingly the source of distress. We know this because in all too many cases it is easy for people to say, ‘I accept and I welcome and I create space for LGBTIQ+ folk – but.’ I have spoken many times in this chamber over the years about the hurt that sits, an undercurrent, pegged to this one word ‘but’.

When we look at an inquiry and a motion in the terms that Mrs Deeming has proposed, the way in which it has been phrased – and I would urge people to go to the language of the way in which it has been phrased – it invites a conclusion that trans and gender-diverse identity is not only other but is wrong. But despite the fact that trans and gender-diverse people have existed for as long as people have existed, this is something which is being increasingly politicised. There is a significant distinction at play here – politics, lived experience; rights, lived experience; the academic understanding of what a good society should be; the reality that so many trans and gender-diverse folk face every single day in environments and systems, in frameworks, in laws, in language, in forms, in the way in which they are allowed to participate or to connect, able to access public facilities that so many of us take for granted, able to play sport, able to use change rooms, able to access education, able to access gender-affirming health care. It is the steady incursion into the basis for this desire to be connected which chips away at the capacity for trans and gender-diverse folk to participate.

At the heart of this particular motion is a further narrative that presupposes that further chipping away is not only justifiable but necessary in the name of some sense of ambiguity around treatment, around medical practice. We have divergent views around the world as they relate to gender-affirming care, as they relate to the application of the Gillick principle, as they relate to the way in which treatment is provided. The measure of ambiguity, however, is not a reason to extend to the idea of a veto, because

if that were the case, if the existence of some doubt or divergence in opinion were the reason not to proceed with a decision, with a legal change, with an opportunity for people to be safe and dignified and respected and connected to communities and able to join in the lives, the routines and the wonderful rituals that so many of us take for granted, then there would be an overwhelming surge in disadvantage and discrimination – and we are better than that.

We have worked so hard since 2014 to lean into not only these challenges, not only the constant current of discrimination, that laminated disadvantage that occurs throughout the whole of a trans or gender-diverse person's life, but to make sure that where we can we are providing counterpoints to it in the way in which documentation – a birth certificate – can reflect the identity of a person, to give a sense of reflection in bureaucracy, something so personal as that. That this can be the subject of politics ignores the reality of the value of the treasured nature of a pronoun where it is reflected in that official documentation.

In every single thing that we have done in the space of equality, whether it has been about access to adoption or whether it has been about births, deaths and marriages legislation reform; changes to the Equal Opportunity Act 2010; or removal of harmful conversion and suppression practices as allowable under the name of medical treatment or other sort of engagement with somebody in relation to their gender or their sexuality or their identity, we have worked so hard to provide a pathway for LGBTIQ+ people to be visible. That has not happened without fierce resistance. We know only too well the cost of that resistance, the cost of that 'but' and the idea that at every turn there must be a prosecution afresh and an advocacy afresh of our very right to hold space, our very right to talk about who we are without eyes being rolled and the idea of virtue signalling being raised as an automatic response.

We have an obligation as a Parliament to understand the impact of the work that we do, and whilst I respect Mrs Deeming's right to bring a motion to this place, I cannot accept the way in which it has been framed. I cannot accept not just the what but the why, and I will in the course of my opportunity to talk today underscore further my support, my love for and my ongoing respect for members of our trans and gender-diverse communities. The idea of support for these communities, for our communities, is why government opposes this motion and looks forward to resolution in those terms.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (15:23): I rise to speak to motion 124, and I note the comments made by the government in relation to the concerns raised by the government, but this motion is looking at a parliamentary inquiry into a range of matters that are in the public domain and have raised significant discussion not only in Victoria but across various other jurisdictions. I want to just return to, for those members that were not in the Parliament when we debated it just a few years ago, the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020. I spoke at length to many, many people at that time – a range of stakeholders – predominantly around the issues relating to concerns raised with me from medical practice. I want to go back to some of that, because I know that Mr Limbrick is going to put an amendment into this particular motion. I have seen the wording, and we would support that. But I do think it is important to understand that at the time when we were debating that there were a number of concerns raised by, as I said, the AMA, who had concerns around a clause that restricted:

... what psychiatrists can talk about in a session, and therefore limits appropriate normal psychiatric practice.

I am quoting from a letter that they sent me and the government.

This restriction is brought about by the use of the word 'necessary'. There can be significant discussion around whether a treatment is necessary and by whom. Therefore, we urge that the words 'when clinically appropriate' be substituted in place of 'necessary'.

Then I had further discussions with health insurers, and again they were concerned about not the intent of the bill but about how the legislation would apply. They wrote and outlined those concerns, and around the time in relation to the bill – and it goes to the point of this motion, because it is talking

about a whole range of issues that are affecting gender-diverse people, transgender people, intersex, bisexual, a range of people – they said that:

Section 5 of the ... Bill also makes it clear that a person is not undertaking a change or suppression practice if it is a practice or conduct for the purposes of assisting a person who is undergoing or considering undergoing a gender transition or providing them with “... *acceptance, support or understanding*”.

None of the legislation refers to gender dysphoria and it is not clear to us how the distinction between sexual orientation and gender dysphoria impacts on the application of the legislation, nor how providing psychiatric treatment to a person with gender dysphoria would fall foul of the legislation, particularly in light of the above.

I make these points because that is what I am interested in. Is the legislation actually working? Is the legislation that was put into this place a few years ago – the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021 – actually working to assist people that are going through treatments and a range of other things that they require? Of course we want people to be safe, we want people to be treated appropriately and we want people to be supported. All of us want that. I am particularly interested in what an inquiry would do to see if this legislation is actually working – is it doing what it is supposed to be doing? – because there is no oversight or overview that has been undertaken. That is the problem here, because we do have all of this discussion that is floating around, and it is difficult. It is difficult for people to understand: is that accurate or not accurate? What is actually going on here? We have many inquiries in this house on a range of issues. If you look at what we are doing – the committee work of this house – a house of review undertakes that work. I do not have any problem with a range of issues going to an inquiry, which this motion asks to occur. As it says on the Parliament’s own website:

Committees are formed of members from one house or both houses. Committees hold inquiries into particular issues and call for input from the wider community.

That is the work of the committee process in this Parliament, and that is what this motion is asking – get the views from the community, understand what is going on.

As I said, I am particularly interested in seeing if that legislation is actually working as it is intended. As I said, we have got a range of inquiries going on. The Economy and Infrastructure Committee is looking into industrial hemp, local government funding, cultural and creative industries and pig welfare. We have got a flood inquiry going. Education, rental and housing affordability inquiries, workplace drug testing and safety aspects in relation to medicinal cannabis and whether there is a framework that is working to keep people safe – this work is diverse. These committees do diverse work. That is a range of topics. This motion is just asking for another inquiry to be undertaken. It is not entirely controversial in relation to that work whether you agree with the wording or not.

I do take some points, and I understand that some of the issues Ms Shing raised are important issues. There are so many major medical bodies that are very supportive, supporting people who, as you described, have identity and transgender issues and should be respected. We all agree with that. I have no problem with it. It is difficult and complex at times. It is very sensitive work that needs to be done, and those medical bodies are doing some excellent work. They are doing excellent work in terms of working through this, because of some of the issues that are in the community. There are new Australian guidelines around gender-affirming care. This is all very good work. I support it, and I want to see what is happening from these experts. We need to give our general practitioners guidelines for them to be able to understand when they are dealing with these matters. It is all very sensible. But equally, I think there are some issues around some of the concerns that have been raised around parental rights. Those issues are very important. They are important for medical practitioners with the patients that they are dealing with. This is a complex issue, and we should not shy away from this house doing complex work on complex, sensitive issues. It is important work.

I say with my last few minutes that we are a house of review. We have got a range of inquiries being undertaken. This is important work. As I said, there were issues that were raised when legislation was put into this place two years ago, and an inquiry can see if the concerns that were raised then are

actually being applied. I know this is slightly different, but I take it to the point of the other issue around the other matters that Mr Limbrick has put into his amendment to the motion, because that is the sort of thing I would like if this motion gets up – that it would look at: is that bill working? Those unintended consequences that were highlighted by the likes of health insurers, the AMA and others – should there be some refinement to the legislation? That is why I am supporting the intent of Mr Limbrick’s amendment – so that the inquiry can look at some of those issues as well. It is important work. There is so much good work being done around the community. As I said, this house does a lot of inquiries, and I do not see why this sensitive, complex issue should not be looked into also.

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (15:33): I also rise to speak on this motion for an inquiry, brought forward by Mrs Deeming. Let us start with few facts. In Victoria now, due to the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021, the only real model of care that we have in Victoria is the affirmation-only model. That is the first fact. The second fact is that some people are harmed by the affirmation-only model. Some people are misdiagnosed through that process and severely harmed. In fact I acknowledge that there are two brave women today in the gallery who fit that category: Mel and Lee. The third fact: for children, when we are talking about medical treatments, which is what this inquiry is looking at – medical treatments for children – there are no good longitudinal studies that show long-term regret rates or long-term outcomes for these treatments for children. When I talk about long-term outcomes, I am talking about long-term treatments with puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and, later on, potential surgery.

We also know that there have been inquiries in many different jurisdictions, most notably the Cass review in the UK. When the interim report on that was released, they actually suspended giving those drugs to children because they determined that the evidence base for their safety and efficacy over the short and long term was not sufficient, and they ruled them out, except for clinical research. Similarly, other jurisdictions throughout the world, such as Sweden – which were leaders in this space – have done similar things, as have Finland, Norway and various US jurisdictions.

Moir Deeming: And Denmark.

David LIMBRICK: Thank you, Mrs Deeming – Denmark as well. So it is clear that other jurisdictions do not agree with the Victorian government’s approach on whether or not there is a good evidence base for giving these types of treatments to children. I would also say that it is not just a political issue. Recently MDA insurance in Australia have said to private practice doctors that they will no longer insure them because they are concerned about lawsuits over the long term. They see what is coming down the road. It is also my understanding that later this year the final report from the Cass review in the UK will be released, and I look forward to reading that.

The fact of the matter is that over the long term we have no idea. There is no good evidence on what sort of harm these treatments might be doing to children. I question the motives of anyone that would oppose an inquiry, because if you have concerns about this you should support the inquiry. If you think that what we are doing in Victoria is world class and top notch, you have nothing to fear from an inquiry and you have nothing to fear from this being examined and scrutinised. What I am concerned about is that people that oppose this are trying to cover up what is going on. I have very serious concerns about what is going on. Why is it that every time that someone wants to talk about this the reaction from activists and from people in the government is to shut them up? They call them names. They say, ‘You’re a transphobe. You’re a Nazi.’ When people are trying to have very rational debate, instead of engaging in that debate the default response is to shut them up. This is unacceptable. These are important issues. You will not silence debate on this. Debate will happen with or without you. We are talking to people who have been harmed by this, and their voices deserve to be heard as well.

I noticed in Ms Shing’s contribution she did not mention anyone that had been harmed. She talked as if no-one has been harmed by this process.

Harriet Shing: That’s literally not what I said. Don’t verbal me. I was really careful with it.

David LIMBRICK: All right. Ms Shing is acknowledging that maybe some people –

Harriet Shing: I was really careful.

David LIMBRICK: All right. I was not trying to verbal you, Ms Shing. Nevertheless, some people have been harmed, and I am not convinced that there is good evidence over the long term on what that harm looks like. How many people are we talking about? What sorts of percentages are we talking about here? Whenever I have been shown evidence on this, there are studies that have deeply flawed science, and I am one of the few members of Parliament that has actually got a background in science. But many of these studies are deeply flawed, and most of them, if not all of the ones that I have seen, do not relate to children at all. They are talking about adults.

So I think that there are very serious concerns, and we need to look at this. Whether it is through this inquiry – if this does not pass today we are not going to give up looking at this. I think it is only going to get bigger. More and more people, in no small part due to the bravery of people like Mel, have been talking to members of the public, and I will tell you that people that do not know about what is going on are very concerned when they hear about it. They are very concerned. This is not about being anti-trans or being hateful or bigoted. We are concerned about medical harm being caused, and we want comfort that the current medical practices or the standards of care, as they call them, are not causing more harm than they are helping.

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (15:39): I also rise to make a contribution on Mrs Deeming's motion 124. Look, I want to acknowledge Ms Shing's contribution. It was a very thoughtful and considered contribution in this area. I also note there are people in the gallery, and I would also encourage everyone who is participating in this debate to please be mindful and respectful that we are talking about people here and that some of the discussion that we are entering into may be hurtful and upsetting to people. I want to try and conduct my contribution in as sensitive a way as I possibly can, and I just want to apologise to anyone in advance if anything that I say is hurtful. It is not my intention to be hurtful or ill considered in anything that I want to say today.

I just want to say at the outset I am not a member of the LGBTIQ+ community but I am a supporter and an ally, and I actively participate in a range of activities that this government leads, particularly around the Pride March. I am always happy to be at the Pride March supporting our LGBTIQ+ community. I want to say at the outset in regard to this motion that the nub of Mrs Deeming's motion is the concern that she has around children who may be experiencing gender dysphoria, and I guess what Mrs Deeming is trying to advocate for is her concern about some of the treatment of children who are in this space – and it is really primarily about treatment. Talking about children under 18 is the nub of this motion. Her argument is that some of the treatment through the model of gender-affirming care can be harmful to those children.

Now, I am going to talk a bit in a moment about some of the detail, and I note Ms Shing stole a lot of my thunder there – but I thank you for that, because I think you put it more aptly than I ever could, as somebody who is a member of the LGBTIQ+ community. So I feel a little bit fraudulent as someone who is not from that community, but nevertheless I want to try and make as thoughtful a contribution as I possibly can. I just want to state that I am a parent, and as a parent, Mrs Deeming, I do not share your point of view at all in regard to this issue. What I want to do is see my children come to me as a parent and tell me that they need help in regard to any issues they are experiencing, and my unreserved offering as a parent of a child –

Moira Deeming: On a point of order, are you saying that you disagree with my point of view as a parent and implying that I would not have my child come to me or something? Could you please clarify?

Sonja TERPSTRA: If I could continue perhaps, Acting President, Mrs Deeming might understand the point that I am trying to make, and could I just state for the record that there has been a bit of a

theme in here today of continued interruption of government members. I would like to be able to continue and explain myself without interruption.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Bev McArthur): Continue, Ms Terpstra.

Sonja TERPSTRA: What I am saying is that I as a parent would like my child to feel that they could come to me if they were experiencing issues around their gender identity or whatever and that I could support them in that. As a parent, what I would do is support them and then seek appropriate medical treatment if that was necessary. I would go to the experts. I am not an expert, I am a parent. As a parent, my first approach is to support my child and then seek medical expert advice and treatment if that was deemed necessary by medical experts.

Having stated that, I want everyone in this chamber to understand that that would be the position I would come from as a parent, but that is why I have concern about the motion that you are putting forward in that it seems to frame it in a way that disconnects the idea that parents do have conversations with their children around these things and that more often than not parents do want to support their child so they do not experience issues like discrimination. I am going to read out in a moment statistics around the sorts of things that are experienced by children from the LGBTIQ+ community and particularly trans children. I have concern that we are even debating this, but I respect and understand that you want to raise this and think that the Parliament is the best place to actually inquire into these matters, whereas I do not think it is. I have done a bit of research around this matter, and there is a lot of medical research and review that is actually being conducted around the world. If I was going to have an opinion on anything, it would be guided by experts, scientists and medical professionals, not people with differing opinions.

But anyway, I just want to get on the record to say that we know that LGBTIQ+ Victorians – and not just Victorians but Australians and anyone in any part of that community – face higher levels of discrimination, stigma and exclusion than any other Victorians, which lead to poorer health outcomes. So again, the main point of this is about health outcomes.

Again, that is why I prefaced my opening remarks by saying that I am concerned that we make sure we conduct this debate in a very compassionate and caring way. Transphobia and discrimination against any member of our LGBTIQ+ community have no place in our community, nor in our healthcare system. As I said, there are a range of health concerns that people from the LGBTIQ+ community experience. Rates of self-reported depression and anxiety diagnosed in trans and gender-diverse young people in Australia is as high as 75 per cent and 72 per cent respectively. Eighty per cent of trans and gender-diverse young people report that they have self-harmed, and 48 per cent report that they have attempted suicide. More than 77 per cent of trans and gender-diverse Victorians report facing unfair treatment based on their gender identity. Almost three-quarters of trans and gender-diverse Victorians report experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress.

We take into account those statistics, and I am going to get into the detail in a moment. I know that Ms Shing talked about this when she talked about Gillick competence. I am also going to talk about gender-affirming care in a moment and the medical guidelines that have been developed by experts in our country. My concern is that we know, based on the statistics and the research – and Mr Limbrick talked about a lack of evidence and research – that people from this community are experiencing high rates of distress. I am just looking at the clock and I have got 3 minutes left, so I will do my best to get to the point that I want to make. The point is there are models of gender-affirming care that have been developed, and I am just quickly going to go to this important point. This is again from the Australian Standards of Care and Treatment Guidelines for Trans and Gender Diverse Children and Adolescents:

With increasing visibility and social acceptance of gender diversity in Australia, more children and adolescents are presenting to community and specialist healthcare services requesting support ...

Being trans or gender diverse is now largely viewed as part of the natural spectrum of human diversity. It is, however, frequently accompanied by significant gender dysphoria ... which is characterised by the distress that arises from incongruence between a person's gender identity and their sex assigned at birth.

I will not go into the rest of the statistics. But then we drill down into why gender-affirming care is the appropriate model. If you talk about Gillick competence, the three aspects of Gillick competence determined by a court – again we are talking about young people under the age of 18, who seriously must be experiencing so much distress that they would put themselves through a situation where they go before the court to have the court determine whether they are competent and determine whether they should be treated under a gender-affirming care model even though their parents do not support that. There is a court process for that.

I think the problem with the motion is that it sort of suggests that there are some people that just rush out and go ‘Hey, as a 14-year-old kid I’m going to go and get this stuff,’ but there is actually a very lengthy and rigid process that people have to go through to be assessed for these sorts of things. It is not something that people enter into lightly, and the courts have been obviously looking at these things over a range of time. I just want to mention – again I am running out of time so I am trying to compress it all in – the World Health Organization, a very important body, looks at these models of gender-affirming care and makes sure that they are contemporary and up to date. I do not think a parliamentary inquiry is the appropriate place to look at these things. As a parent and as a parliamentarian I want to make sure that I am listening to the experts in regard to these things, and I am concerned that a parliamentary inquiry would cause a lot more harm and distress to members of our LGBTIQ+ community, particularly children who obviously are young and experiencing significant distress. I will not be supporting this motion, and I encourage everyone in this chamber to not support this motion as well.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Bev McArthur): Mr Limbrick, I understand you wanted some amendments to be circulated. Would you like to circulate them now and move those amendments?

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (15:49): Thank you, Acting Chair. I apologise. I should have circulated these before. I seek to circulate those amendments now, and I move:

1. In paragraph (4)(b)(ii), omit ‘and’.
2. In paragraph (4)(b)(iii), omit ‘professionals.’ and insert ‘professionals;’ in its place.
3. After paragraph (4)(b)(iii), insert:
 - ‘(c) medical treatments and services available to detransitioners, and the current state of medical research in this area; and
 - (d) any other related matters.’.

It is a very simple amendment. It just expands the scope of the inquiry by adding ‘medical treatments and services available to detransitioners’ – a detransitioner is someone who has transitioned and then detransitions – ‘and the current state of medical research in this area’ and ‘any other related matters’.

Rachel PAYNE (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (15:51): I rise today to confirm Legalise Cannabis Victoria will not be supporting this motion. I am not trans or gender-diverse, so I do not claim to speak for the community, but with a lack of direct representation in this place, allies must use their voices. I have always had transgender people in my life, so today I would like to honour some of them.

When I was a little girl, Noel and Denise were dear friends of our family. Mum and Denise would often spend weekends together at dog shows. They shared a love of showing their prize-winning Pekingese dogs, although it was generally Denise’s dogs that were the prize winners – sorry, Jules. As a little girl, I was enamoured of Denise. She was tall, confident, vivacious and incredibly funny. She was fabulous in the eyes of me as a seven-year-old. One of my favourite childhood memories is of Denise encouraging me to pick some of the grapefruits from her backyard tree, stick them up my T-shirt and pretend to be Dolly Parton. We danced and sang in her backyard. Denise is a transgender woman, now in her 70s, and she and Noel still go to the dog shows with my mum. As I was a curious kid, my mum provided me with a perfectly acceptable explanation as to why Denise was so tall and had a husky voice. It was because she loved a Benson & Hedges and she was born in the wrong body and needed to change that.

In my first year of university in 2000, only new to Lismore, the first friend I made was Nick. We used to carpool to uni together, for which I am forever grateful, because Nick introduced me to Ani DiFranco and used to play cassette tapes on the journey. Ani DiFranco is still to this day one of the most influential artists in my life thanks to Nick, and Nick's story from that time has also stuck with me. You see, Nick was in the process of transitioning, and back then you had to spend five years working with a psychologist to be approved to access hormone therapy – five years of therapy. Nick was always a boy, and he struggled to understand why he could not do the same activities as his younger brother; namely, Nick wanted to join the army reserve like his brother. Nick provided me an insight into what the world was like for him and just how hard it was to fight and continue to advocate just to be himself.

Today as an MP in this place I am blessed to have a very talented, intelligent, hardworking, charming and witty staff member who helped me write this and who is trans. It saddens me incredibly that despite the progress we have made we are still here having to have this fight. This motion shares the same ideologically harmful pseudoscientific foundation as the anti-trans rally on Parliament's steps earlier this year. It seeks to dehumanise and strip rights away from one of Victoria's most vulnerable communities, a community that has weathered so much hatred and abuse, particularly in the last 12 months.

Not only is this motion harmful; it is based on countless lists of inaccuracies, half-truths and mischaracterisations. Take, for instance, point (1) of the motion, which claims that medical affirmation for minors experiencing gender dysphoria is:

... one of the most controversial areas of medicine due to the lack of clinical consensus about what is being treated ...

Incorrect. A clearly defined definition of 'gender dysphoria' backed by almost a century of research is accepted by the Australian Medical Association, the American Medical Association, the World Health Organization, the British Medical Association, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and countless other national and international organisations. This is as close as you will get to a consensus in clinical science. There are medical professionals who understand and respect the science, and then there are extreme outliers who let their personal biases cloud objective facts. Medical professionals know what they are treating and they know how to treat it.

Point (1) of this motion also asks the inquiry to explore the alternative pathways which exist. The only known alternative to gender-affirming care is conversion therapy, a faith-based practice that does not work. It is not supported by science. It is illegal in Victoria and is known to cause significant psychological and physical damage to people who experience it. I do not think anyone could argue it is safer to trust a member of the clergy with a child's care over a medical professional. Conversion therapy is not therapy, it is abuse. A 2021 Melbourne University report stated that gender-diverse people who could not access required medical care experienced a 71 per cent higher chance of attempting suicide. That same study showed gender-diverse people who could access care experienced better mental health and overall quality of life. Medical transition is an individual process carefully considered and discussed between doctor and patient – and parent if the patient is under this age of 16. Dr Ada Cheung's research and work with gender-diverse youth champions an individual model of care and highlights that gatekeeping support and treatment services for gender-diverse minors causes negative mental and physical health outcomes. You cannot just wander off the street into a clinic and walk out on hormone replacement therapy. The medical transition process is long, carefully tailored to each patient's needs and fundamentally designed to allow people to live a full and happy life. The science is clear, extensive and peer reviewed. Gender diversity is not new, and it is not a phase.

Moving to point (2) of the motion and the concept of rights of the child, parents and professionals, I previously worked at the Family Court, and I saw how traumatising it was for the parents of children with gender dysphoria to attend court just to be able to access treatment. You see, at that time the

hospital and the parents would have to bring the child before a judge to receive that approval, which is often a lengthy and tedious process. The parents or legal guardians were always in attendance, and any judge will tell you the rights are with the child, not the parent. As former Justice Bell would often tout, children have rights, parents have responsibilities.

Despite what many in this chamber may think, gender diversity is not some new-age leftie phenomenon. There is a rich history of gender diversity in this country and overseas. In the 2015 book *Colouring the Rainbow* First Nations people spoke about being LGBTIQ+. Because of their individual stories and countless others like them, we know gender diversity has been in Australia since long before British invasion. One example is the sisters who live in the Tiwi islands, an area where over 5 per cent of the population identifies as trans or gender-diverse. Internationally there is evidence of gender diversity in ancient cultures at least as far back as 3000 BC. It is just five millennia before the Nazi regime ransacked and destroyed the world's first transgender medical clinic, including the incineration and subsequent erasure of thousands of clinical records, research and over 20,000 books on gender-diverse care. Despite efforts to erase gender diversity from the history books, we know it is an ancient part of a kaleidoscope of human diversity, and the science tells us it does not fade over time or from attempts to suppress it.

Being transgender or gender-diverse is not a risk to these young people. Seeking out gender-affirming care is not a risk for these young people. Where these young people are put at risk is in a society where they are subjected daily to horrid abuse, hate and systematic barriers to accessing the care they require. Motions like this one in front of us today are part of the problem. It represents an accelerated wave of social stigma towards trans and gender-diverse people, not just in Victoria but around the globe, and I encourage every member of this place to consider the real people we are discussing today. We will not be supporting this hateful and purposely misinformed motion.

Jacinta ERMACORA (Western Victoria) (16:00): I too would like to acknowledge Minister Shing's contribution on this debate and also acknowledge Ms Payne's contribution. I want to acknowledge before I go on, too, anybody that is here that may count themselves as diverse – whether that is gender-diverse or just broadly part of the LGBTIQ community – and those in the gallery as well. At this time, in this week, I would rather be speaking to a motion to help unite us as people rather than a motion underpinned by hurt and division, a motion that includes everyone rather than excludes, a motion that is about love rather than hate, a motion that is about joy and diversity rather than fear of someone different, a motion that addresses how in this state of Victoria equality is not negotiable. All Victorians, no matter how they identify, deserve to feel supported and equal, including with their health and wellbeing. So at this time, in this week, I wish to speak to the human experience that is not addressed in this motion – that it is okay to be different and that every human should have the right to equal services and to be simply respected for who they are in themselves.

I wish to acknowledge the bravery of the first transgender pioneers to emerge from behind closed doors, and their stories, whilst hidden in the margins of society, are a guide to survival. They encouraged others to find the courage to do the same. I speak of people who pose no threat to others. They are seeking after all to simply be themselves. We understand that these types of debates that question the validity of people's decisions about their own bodies have real consequences on the wellbeing of trans and gender-diverse communities and in particular vulnerable young people. As others have already mentioned today, transgender young people are 15 times more likely to end their life. This is not an abstract battle of ideology; these are vulnerable young people who deserve respect and care.

I would like to personally tell the chamber of some local stories of people I know in my region; however, I do not want to risk unnecessarily identifying them and nor do I want to put any more emotional load on them than they are already experiencing in their ordinary everyday lives. Their stories are unique and also familiar. Most trans people have a story – the moment they knew, the

person who showed the way. In a *Guardian* article from 2016, telling the stories of the experiences of people who are trans, there is a quote from someone identified as Nikki, who was 26:

On a day-to-day basis I don't tell people I'm transgender. The thing about trans people is, we feel very normal. It's the way we are, it's only when people say you're not normal that you feel that way.

And there is a further quote from Keith, who was 18:

I'm desperate for hormones and surgery. My dysphoria makes me feel like I'm embarrassed for people to look at me. In my head I'm this weird thing that is ugly. I have to wear baggy clothes to hide my hips, I have to think about how many layers I have to wear to hide my chest.

So let us not delude ourselves: this motion is rooted in discomfort with difference.

There are, however, some wonderful stories emerging across my region due to people's bravery and also in no small part due to the support and services this government has actively provided and resourced. As Minister for Equality Harriet Shing often says, equality is not negotiable. There is \$21 million to actively boost capacity for specialist gender clinics, mental health support and peer and family supports to address the increasing demand for these services; \$1.5 million invested in the trans and gender-diverse community health program; \$2 million in funding committed to the trans and gender-diverse peer support program; and in February 2023 we announced a grant of \$2.85 million to trial LGBTIQ youth spaces in western Victoria to help address mental health and wellbeing inequalities for young people and their families.

Yumcha Hamilton was launched on IDAHOBIT in May, which is International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia. The group named Yumcha stemmed from the Warrnambool Yumcha group, which acknowledges 'a little bit of everything'. Yumcha Hamilton is supported through a key partnership between Brophy Hamilton and Southern Grampians Shire Council. It is offering a safe space to connect and engage young people from LGBTIQ communities and their allies. This is so important in regional communities, and so far 23 young awesome people, 23 young lives, have been engaging in two groups, one for 12- to 17-year-olds and another for 18- to 25-year-olds. They have had some amazing results already. One of the initiatives to spread messages of positivity in the Southern Grampians came about by identifying that these now connected young people share a love of art. Together they created a digital design for a Pride mural. They pitched the idea on where they wanted to paint the mural to the CEO and mayor of Southern Grampians shire. This week Tony Doyle, the CEO, told me the enormous growth in confidence he saw over the six months and that it had been extraordinary to watch. He said that the mural in town has been a wonderful endorsement of their place.

Let us leave the science to the medical profession and researchers. Our job here in this chamber is to foster acceptance and equality for every different person in Victoria. I am proud that the Allan Labor government is leading change, at all times treating our LGBTIQ community Victorians with dignity and respect.

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (16:08): I rise to support Mrs Deeming's motion 124. I want to first of all acknowledge Mel Jeffries, who is here today in the gallery. If you do not know Mel, Mel was born a girl but as a teenager was unhappy, depressed and, like many other teenagers, confused about her identity and sexuality. At 16 Mel said she was:

... looking for a sense of belonging ...

and that she found support and comfort in online communities. She said:

And then it's, like, if you do transition, it's, like, oh, everyone gives you so much love.

Mel's story illustrates another important factor – namely, response to trauma. Mel was sexually assaulted and has said:

... I feel like that was a big fuel for me wanting to transition and not be a woman anymore.

Like others, this feeling that being a woman made her vulnerable and the wish to escape the trauma experience motivated her. To quote:

The magical thinking was like, I could be someone and I wouldn't have to be me. I wouldn't have to deal with everything that came along in my life ...

Maybe all my unhappiness is because I was born in the wrong ... sex.

Mel lived as a man from the age of 18 and had testosterone treatment, which changed her, increasing her weight, muscle and facial hair and deepening her voice. But as she so movingly explained to the meeting we held here in Parliament a fortnight ago, it was not enough. It is never enough if the cure you have found is not treating the actual disease. She then sought a mastectomy:

All my hatred of being a woman was just focused on my chest ...

Mel has bravely talked of her experience and the extraordinary pain, difficulty and long-term physical and mental scars that the transitioning process has left her with. Her story illustrates so many of the problematic consequences of the affirmation pathway in the treatment of gender dysphoria in children and indeed in adults. Mel has now received a different diagnosis, including autism, and is being treated for the issues which she believes were wrongly attributed to gender dysphoria by the inadequacy of the medical professionals who assessed her. But the trauma and the consequences for Mel are lifelong, and I know that she is strongly motivated to speak out by her desire to prevent others from suffering in the same way. As she said to us at the forum at Parliament, she was struck by the phrase 'If not you, then who?'. That is what inspired her to take action, and we are greatly in her debt for doing so. I applaud what Mel has done and what she is trying to do so that this can be prevented from happening to others.

I want to be very clear: this motion is about ensuring that an inquiry will uncover the very best practice for how we treat children. This is not, as Ms Shing tried to conflate the issue, about adults who are LGBTIQ whatever. This is not about that. This is about minors – children and adolescents who have a problem, and it may well not be gender dysphoria; we have learned that.

We really have to get to the bottom of how we are treating minors with permanently disfiguring medical, pharmaceutical and even surgical applications. How can children or even young adults fully grasp the long-term implications of their choices? What is at issue here are life-changing and irreversible decisions about lifelong sexual function, experience and fertility. In fact nobody can grasp the implications, because the consequences simply are not known. There is insufficient evidence from any long-term study on the safety of the social, pharmaceutical and surgical interventions promoted. It is legally questionable, medically irresponsible and morally repugnant to reduce the influence of parents and medical professionals in this process and to accept the inadequate consent of children.

Some children may believe they would feel better in a different body as a result of other underlying issues, such as trauma or other mental health concerns. Instead of receiving treatment tailored to these distinct challenges, children are put on a path which will not adequately address their genuine needs, as Mel's case showed. The medical community's fundamental principle of 'first do no harm' is turned on its head by the affirmation model – firstly because of the lack of evidence of long-term safety or long-term effectiveness but also in the reduced scope it gives them to use their professional expertise.

In treating other conditions like anorexia or psychotic disorders, medical practitioners are trained to recognise and rectify the patient's misconceptions of reality. They do not indulge in the individual's potentially harmful beliefs. However, the affirmation-only model seems to diverge from this tradition. The fact that many countries around the world are now rejecting this approach is evidence of why an inquiry in this state is essential to get to the bottom of what we are doing to children. What are the long-term consequences? If you think we are managing this process magnificently in this state, then you have nothing to fear from an inquiry. Let us have all the experts on all sides of the spectrum put their positions. We will all be the better for that evidence.

In my view the risk–reward ratio for this approach has never been good. As further evidence of the lasting developmental impact of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones emerges, it is getting ever worse. How many false positives are ethically acceptable? What are the percentages, the real numbers? Even if the affirmation-only model and the treatment it heralds has the right approach for some patients, how many damaged lives are we going to accept where it was not the right thing to do? Victorian family law barrister Belle Lane presented a detailed paper to judges of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia challenging the foundational research supporting a gender-affirming model of care. Her analysis of fresh research into the effects of hormone treatments and puberty blockers on young Australians contradicts previous studies that advocated for the gender-affirming approach. Considering this evolution in scientific knowledge, Ms Lane suggests that courts must rethink how these recent scientific advancements should inform the family law system. She notes that the evidence base around what is termed ‘gender-affirming treatment’ has evolved swiftly, and our understanding of the purported benefits and associated risks of the medical pathway has deepened. Moreover, she underscores the resurgence of alternative treatment pathways.

I urge this house to support the motion that sends an inquiry to the Legal and Social Issues Committee and say again: you have nothing to fear if your position is going to be ratified. Why would you be afraid to have your position put forward? I would say as members of this Parliament our first duty should be, like the medical profession, to do no harm. I am not in this place to sanction permanent medical, pharmaceutical and surgical intervention for minors without real justification or evidence that there are long-term benefits. This has nothing to do with mature age trans or gender-diverse folk, as Ms Shing refers to them. This is about children. This is –

Harriet Shing interjected.

Bev McARTHUR: Well, that is how you referred to them, Ms Shing: ‘folk’. *(Time expired)*

Aiv PUGLIELLI (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (16:19): I rise to speak on this motion, and frankly what a waste of our time in this chamber it is. You would think that people in this place representing the wonderfully diverse members of the community would use their debate slot to raise issues affecting the community, but instead we get to waste our time on this, an attack on an already marginalised and persecuted group for no other reason than to entertain the fringe beliefs of a small few in this place. Let us be clear here: these are fringe beliefs. Our state, time and time again, has demonstrated that it supports the trans and gender-diverse community, and Victorian medical professionals in this field are world leaders in gender-affirming care. Yet trans and gender-diverse people still face significant barriers in accessing gender-affirming care in this state, such as access to publicly funded care.

These are barriers that actually need to be addressed, but instead some members are using their time to establish themselves as hateful transphobes. I understand all too well –

Bev McArthur: On a point of order, Acting President, I take total exception to that assertion, and I would like the member to withdraw it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (John Berger): I ask that you withdraw that comment.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Just to respond, I have not named a member.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (John Berger): Mr Puglielli, I ask that you withdraw that comment.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: I withdraw the word ‘transphobe’. I understand all too well what it is like to grow up queer, growing up as an outsider, where people genuinely believe I have no right to exist and that being gay is something that can be fixed, that parents, teachers and doctors who support gay kids are wrong. And things have not changed; it is just that now trans kids are being subject to this treatment instead. Haven’t trans and gender-diverse people been through enough? It is not enough for some in this place that trans and gender-diverse people are receiving an unprecedented amount of hate. They want to remove their health care too.

The medical care that trans kids are receiving from the dedicated, caring professionals in Victoria is exemplary, and I trust those professionals far more than members in this place who have a very public disdain for trans and gender-diverse people and a very transparent political goal. They do not care about kids. They care more about a headline in the paper. Again, these are fringe beliefs. There are incredible experts working in Victoria to ensure that our trans and gender-diverse community members of all ages receive the best possible care, and we have a responsibility to support them. Research shows that access to gender-affirming care is associated with lower rates of depression and suicidality among trans and gender-diverse people. Gender-affirming care saves lives. That is a fact. The people in the best position to determine what care they need are the people themselves and trained medical professionals, as is already the case in Victoria.

I was speaking earlier with a non-binary member of my staff about this motion. During their time here in this place, they have experienced distress. They have broken down crying in the hallways of this building because of the hate they have witnessed in this place towards their community. But they wanted the people in this place to know that trans people are resilient. They are a wonderful, inclusive community who are not going anywhere. We need to be looking at what more we can be doing to support trans and gender-diverse youth, to make gender-affirming care more accessible, to stop the hatred they are currently facing. Despite the hatred from people in this place, I am glad that I get to stand up today and say that I and the Greens unequivocally support trans and gender-diverse people, and I say to them: you are not alone. We will fight for you. We will fight for your medical care, your safety and your right to exist. I promise you that. We will not be supporting this motion.

Sheena WATT (Northern Metropolitan) (16:23): It is truly a delight to get up and reaffirm that in this state equality is not negotiable. All Victorians – let me say this three times – all Victorians, no matter how they identify, deserve to feel safe, supported and equal, including in their health and wellbeing. Now, I rise, and let me tell you, I feel quite a passion about this. It is just a shame I have only got 7 minutes, because I could take 74, actually. I rise to oppose this divisive motion. We know absolutely without a second of hesitation that LGBTIQ+ Victorians face higher levels of discrimination, stigma and exclusion than other Victorians, which leads to poorer health outcomes. Transphobia and discrimination against any member of the LGBTIQA+ community are completely and categorically unacceptable in our community each and every day. You see, in our community, whether that be out on the streets, in our health systems or even in this place, the Allan Labor government is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of trans and gender-diverse Victorians. We know without hesitation that trans and gender-diverse people can face significant challenges through the journey to affirming their gender identity, especially when this is met with stigma and misunderstanding.

We know that access to timely multidisciplinary trans and gender-diverse healthcare teams makes a crucial difference. That is why the Victorian government is absolutely committed to ensuring trans and gender-diverse Victorians receive the health care and the support that they need, and there is so much that we are doing to make that possible. Despite the life-changing and life-saving progress that has been made, there is always more to be done, particularly for the trans community living in regional Victoria. Let me just say we will continue to show leadership and stand with the LGBTI community, particularly trans Victorians. We are committed to making sure that you have access to the services you need and that when you walk in there you feel welcomed and you feel safe in this state, something others in this place would see reversed. Well, not me, and not those of us on this side. There is no place for hate in our state.

While I am here and on my feet I am going to take a moment to acknowledge the work of the Minister for Equality in this place, Harriet Shing. You are absolutely tireless, relentless and unwaveringly dedicated to ensuring that this place, this state, is leading the nation. You are a champion. I heard your remarks earlier and I have heard them over the years, and I am just so proud to get to share this with you. You are a champion, but you do not do this alone. As good as you are, you do not do this alone. So many walk with you in this work, and so many of the folks that walk with you are members of the

caucus, members of the government, members of the healthcare community, members of our NGOs and our rep bodies – they are all over the place. The truth is that the work just has not stopped and it will not stop whilst we await the celebration and the support necessary to ensure that the LGBTI community's rights are protected.

I could talk so much about the Northern Metropolitan Region, home to so many members of the LGBTIQA+ community – members that are proud, members that have hopes and aspirations – and of course all the organisations that wrap around and support them, including Thorne Harbour Health. A big shout-out to you. For over 40 years you been a bastion of health and wellbeing, a leader in our community, and I am just so proud that you find home in the northern suburbs. Celebrating your 40th anniversary – what a special occasion that was. Simon and the team, this is a tough time for each and every one of you, and I want to especially acknowledge that these debates make it harder for you to do what you do. So thank you to your team for standing up, and know that when you do that you stand up supported by each and every member of the Allan Labor government. Supporting these communities is not just vital, is not just important; it goes to the very heart of who we are as a state.

There are statistics for days about why we need to fix this, but let me tell you this government, the most progressive in this state's history, is entirely committed, absolutely committed, to ensuring the Victorian gender-diverse community know that we see you and we are here for you. The Allan Labor government is committed to helping in every way it can. We have allocated millions of dollars and all the rest, but let me just say I am a little bit emotional because I just got off the phone with the commissioner for LGBTIQA+ communities, who let me know about how tough it is out there. The calls are off the charts to the leadership right now. The hurt and the harm are real and are very much felt. To the commissioner, the team and all the organisations that wrap around our community, thank you. Know that it is just one day and one motion, and it will not stop our resolve to stand up, walk together and walk firmly with the community.

You will see me and so many of us at all the things that we do, and on the very rare occasions that I find myself in the Southern Metro Region, one of those places that I visit most frequently is the Victorian Pride Centre. I have got to say there is a centre full of hope and love and a really proud achievement of our government. There is so much that we could do, but it does not go unnoticed that when these questions and debates come up they can cause harm – so, so, so much hurt. But we have a plan for that and a plan that is one that I have read thoroughly many, many times.

The Victorian government has a 10-year plan for LGBTI equality. It is called *Pride in our Future*, and it outlines a series of efforts to break down barriers for Victorians to live freely and safely and receive the crucial healthcare services that they require and absolutely deserve. If you want to know what the plan is for this state, have a read of the strategy. It is good reading, I have got to say. It happened following immense community consultations with the community, not just from the current commissioner but the former commissioner, and I pay my respects to commissioner Ro Allen for her incredible, remarkable leadership over the last little while. The work outlined in that strategy, the model of care that the commission and the strategy outline, I just think is second to none and something we should be enormously proud of.

We will never stop working – never, never stop working – to ensure that LGBTIQA+ Victorians feel safe and know that we walk with them each and every day. The strategy is something that I know comes from the voice of members of the LGBTI community. Those consultations, my gosh, were extensive. They went to the very corners of our state – the big smoke, the little towns, the places that some of us have not gone to – because everywhere in this state are members of the LGBTI community. Wherever they are, they deserve to feel supported by this government. Know that you are. You absolutely are. This government will always stand with our rainbow mob family and make clear that equality is absolutely not negotiable.

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) incorporated the following:

My contribution today on Mrs Deeming's motion is made as a health professional and ally of trans and gender-diverse people.

At the outset, can I pay tribute to the strength and resilience of trans and gender-diverse Victorians, and I am sorry that your lives are once again being subjected to unnecessary and public scrutiny. Can I also recognise the families, organisations, health professionals, and other community members for whom these public discussions are distressing as well.

The Greens are deeply concerned by the amplification of misinformation about health care provided to trans and gender-diverse young people, which only perpetuates this harm by fostering stigma and discrimination in the broader community.

The role of gender-affirming health care is to support trans people so that they may be given the right to live a full life – something we all deserve. The right to access gender-affirming care is supported by all major medical bodies in Australia and the World Health Organization.

Evidence shows that access to supportive gender-affirming care during childhood and adolescence significantly improves health outcomes and reduces harms.

Supportive healthcare professionals can help to diminish the impact of constant and pervasive discrimination, which has a tremendously negative impact on health and wellbeing, particularly mental health. The clinicians who provide gender-affirming care that I have encountered are amongst the most sensitive, dedicated, and well-qualified people I know. What is striking is their commitment to person-centredness – they recognise that to provide the care that people need in a safe and effective way, you have to listen to and work collaboratively with them. This is true of all health care; however, it is especially the case for gender-affirming care due to the broad spectrum of needs and experiences of trans and gender-diverse people.

There are many different measures that can form part of gender-affirming care for children and adolescents, most quite simple and reversible. The singular and often ill-informed focus that some have on specific clinical interventions perpetuates unhelpful myths about gender-affirming care and fails to recognise the holistic and individualised nature of care.

This diversity of needs and care is reflected in the extensive body of national and international guidelines that inform clinical care provided to trans and gender-diverse children. These guidelines include the Australian Standards of Care and Treatment Guidelines for Trans and Gender Diverse Children and Adolescents from the Royal Children's Hospital and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People.

These guidelines are the result of decades of research, collaboration, and expertise. The fundamental principles underpinning them have support of peak medical bodies in Australia, including the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. There are established scientific processes that are followed for their development, and they are continually revised and updated as we learn more.

An example of the evolution of medical guidance can be seen in the recent update of the World Health Organization's international classification of diseases, or ICD-11. It is worth noting that the term 'gender dysphoria' is no longer used, and importantly, it is also no longer listed in the mental and behavioural disorders chapter of ICD-11. This is because it has been rightly recognised that trans and gender identities are not a result of mental ill health, and this outdated terminology and conception of gender identities perpetuates stigma. The main driver now for including gender incongruence in the ICD-11 at all is to ensure all health systems include access to gender-affirming care.

However, one of the major issues that young trans Victorians face – particularly adolescents – is in fact tremendous difficulty accessing gender-affirming care. There are insufficient services, exacerbated by all the usual barriers to care, such as rurality. GPs are restricted in the types of care they can provide, and consent provisions make it more challenging for adolescents to access than other types of health care. The result is many young people face years of waiting to access care that they need, which in turn results in significant harm and distress.

Moreover, it's important to acknowledge that a quarter of trans and gender-diverse people have experienced discrimination in accessing health care, including at times refusal of care – the medical profession sadly sometimes perpetuates harms, which is a reflection of the stigma that is still deeply embedded throughout society.

We still have a long way to go, and as demonstrated by the motion and contributions today, progress cannot be assumed or the gains made taken for granted.

A GP who provides gender-affirming care summarised it well when she told me that if we genuinely care about the safety and quality of life of trans and gender-diverse young people, we need to do more to ensure that society embraces them for who they are. An inquiry would not only fail to achieve this or add anything to the body of scientific evidence available to guide care, it would cause further harm by providing a platform for misinformation and stigma.

The Greens are committed to ensuring all young people can access the health care they need and have a fundamental right to, regardless of who they are or where they live.

Moira DEEMING (Western Metropolitan) (16:32): I thank everybody for their contributions today. I could not help but notice that most of the people on the other side of the chamber spent more time talking about themselves and their own identities and their own government and who their friends are and how it was such a waste of their time to have to spend time on a subject like this. Well, I have to remind you all that it is not about you; it is about children and what they deserve. What they deserve is evidence-based care, and that is not what they are getting in Victoria.

You talk about participation. Is it going to help children to participate when they have got fistulas? Is it going to help them participate, like the little girl in Sweden who went on puberty blockers, if their spine erodes to the point where they cannot walk anymore? She is in a wheelchair. Are you going to help them with their dignity when they have secondary gender dysphoria because after they desist they now feel like they no longer fit in to either category and, because the damage in this case is permanent, they do not know what to do with the rest of their lives? Is it progressive to let minors have full hysterectomies and go into catastrophic early dementia by the time they are 30 and end up in care homes? I do not think so. I do not actually think that that sounds anything like love.

I could not believe the amount of non-arguments that I just heard and the abuse and the personal attacks, which have absolutely nothing to do with what is best for children. It does not matter about their sexuality. The amount of you that brought up sexuality – it is nothing to do with their sexuality. It is nothing to do with really anything except evidence-based care. I did not deny the existence of gender dysphoria. I did not say it was not hard. I think it is a terrible thing for a child to have, and I want them to get the very best care in the whole world. Countries that you have all praised for their progressive approach on this very issue have now changed their minds due to massive research projects you are now ignoring as if they do not exist. There are people in this gallery that belong to the LGBTQI community, and they do not agree with you – and they were harmed.

You can attack me all you want. You can call me terrible names, and it will not do anything to help those children get evidence-based care, which is all this motion is about. I raise parents' rights because parents are the very best and first protectors of their children. They know their children more than anyone else. I could not believe it as a teacher when I found out I had permission to lie to parents if their kids decided to socially transition at school. Teachers should not have that power. They do not know enough about the personal life. I do believe in experts having a say. That is why I want this inquiry. That is why teachers, who are not experts, should never be involved in such a massive clinical decision.

Clinicians themselves do not even have the freedom now to give proper care for their patients and individualised care. That is just a lie. We have set in stone through legislation in Victoria one treatment pathway and one treatment pathway only, and it just so happens to be the treatment pathway that is doing catastrophic, irreversible harm to children. Why would you let your hate for me, which by the way is totally unfounded, get in the way of an honest look at what is best for children in this situation? The fact that you spend half of your time attacking me and labelling your opponents with nasty names instead of dealing with the actual issue at hand is honestly disappointing. I am sure you are all very nice people to the people that you like, but children come first in this motion.

Honestly, I did not think that this motion would get up. I just wanted to have on record the exact names of all the people who voted against this commonsense motion. There was nothing in there that could remotely be accused of being hateful or transphobic or homophobic or any kind of phobic. Either your conclusions, your views, would have been proven correct or mine would have – or maybe neither of

ours, maybe some other version. But for the safety and welfare of children we absolutely should have done it. You certainly do not mind spending money on whatever you want or on debt, so it is not like you are going to run out money or resources, and this is one thing that is absolutely worth every dollar.

I am sick and tired and traumatised myself from meeting all these detransitioners, like the ones up here – these brave women and these brave men who come back 10, 15, 20 years later or maybe not even that long sometimes. All over the world it is happening, and they are saying, ‘Why did you let me do this? Why did anybody let me do this? Why did they allow this to happen? You don’t let us get tattoos. You don’t let us go out beyond a certain hour. You don’t let us watch certain TV shows. You control us in a lot of other ways, but why would you let us make this decision, which is catastrophic, irreversible and permanent?’

Council divided on amendments:

Ayes (16): Matthew Bach, Melina Bath, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, David Limbrick, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Bev McArthur, Joe McCracken, Nicholas McGowan, Evan Mulholland, Adem Somyurek, Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell

Noes (21): Ryan Batchelor, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Katherine Copsey, Enver Erdogan, Jacinta Ermacora, David Ettershank, Michael Galea, Shaun Leane, Sarah Mansfield, Tom McIntosh, Rachel Payne, Aiv Puglielli, Georgie Purcell, Samantha Ratnam, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Sheena Watt

Amendments negatived.

Council divided on motion:

Ayes (16): Matthew Bach, Melina Bath, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, David Limbrick, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Bev McArthur, Joe McCracken, Nicholas McGowan, Evan Mulholland, Adem Somyurek, Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell

Noes (21): Ryan Batchelor, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Katherine Copsey, Enver Erdogan, Jacinta Ermacora, David Ettershank, Michael Galea, Shaun Leane, Sarah Mansfield, Tom McIntosh, Rachel Payne, Aiv Puglielli, Georgie Purcell, Samantha Ratnam, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Sheena Watt

Motion negatived.

Business of the house

Sessional orders

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (16:46): I am pleased to move motion 207, which is a sensible, practical sessional order – a modest change to the procedures and practices of the chamber. I move:

That, until the end of the session, unless otherwise ordered by the Council, the following sessional orders be adopted, to come into operation on the next sitting week:

X. Production of documents – short form documents motions with debate

After Standing Order 10.01(3) insert –

and for those who wish to follow this, they can look at their standing orders at page 39, chapter 10, ‘Production of documents’ –

- (4) A motion under this Standing Order (other than a motion that imposes a sanction) may be treated by the Council as a short form documents motion with debate. The following short form documents motion with debate procedures will apply –
 - (a) a member must advise of the intention for the motion to be treated by the Council as a short form documents motion with debate at the time of giving notice under Standing Order 6.01;

- (b) a maximum of two motions under this Sessional Order may be debated each day that general business is scheduled to occur;
- (c) if additional notices above the number permitted for debate each sitting day are given for short form documents motions with debate, they will be listed on subsequent sitting days in the order that notice was given;
- (d) a motion proposed to be debated under this Sessional Order will take precedence at the time prescribed for general business, as follows –
 - (i) where the House has resolved that certain general business take precedence, no short form documents motions with debate will be called until a member has moved the second reading of any bills for which precedence has been ordered and it has been adjourned pursuant to Standing Order 14.06;
 - (ii) where the House has not resolved any general business that will take precedence, any short form documents motions with debate will be listed as the first item/s in general business;
- (e) the following time limits will apply to a short form documents motion with debate –
 - (i) the mover of the motion may speak only once for up to six minutes;
 - (ii) any other member may speak for up to five minutes;
 - (iii) the total time for consideration of the motion will be up to 20 minutes; and
- (f) at the conclusion of debate or after 20 minutes of debate (whichever occurs first), the President will put all questions necessary to dispose of the motion and any amendments.

As I say, this is a very modest proposal. It will introduce a new procedure here to have those short-form documents motions. I hasten to add that in earlier times documents were often debated for very short periods of time – often less than 10 minutes. I think the record is in the order of 5 or 6 minutes for a motion to be dealt with.

Often the mover of the motion would put their case for the documents motion succinctly and then would explain why the public interest was served by this. Sometimes the government or another party may make a short contribution, but often the documents motions were dealt with in succinct, practical, pragmatic style. I note that there is a codified practice here for the provision of documents in this way, and there is also under this section the ability for documents to be tabled in a structured way with an index, and it deals with claims made by government of executive privilege. I note at 10.04 there is the opportunity for the appointment of an independent legal arbiter: that has never been done in this chamber, although in other jurisdictions this is a well-established practice, particularly in New South Wales. I can inform the house that the document production procedures in this house were in fact written by me and others in the period after 2006, and we relied on many of the arrangements in New South Wales as a model to use.

Of course the provision of documents, or the request for documents of the chamber, is an ancient power – the house having the powers of the House of Commons in 1856, the power to call for documents and persons. It is a well-tested power. Indeed in regard to the New South Wales precedents, which have been all the way to the High Court, the Egan case in particular lays out the limits and strengths of the powers. I think the conclusion is that probably the chamber here has greater powers than the New South Wales Legislative Council from which the Egan case emanated, and that was tested all the way to the High Court of the land. The QC in that case Bret Walker was requested by this chamber to give a legal opinion on the powers of the chamber with respect to documents and persons, particularly documents, after the new sessional orders were then put in place in that period, and those legal opinions are actually available to members if they wish to see them. There are two of them: one with respect to the gaming committee and one with respect to the general powers of the chamber. Bret Walker, an eminent barrister – KC I think is what we would call it now, not QC – is a person of great knowledge and experience. He laid out the parameters and the arrangements by which privileges could be claimed over documents and the matters which would legitimately give rise to such privilege claims and those that would not. So it is a comprehensive set of opinions and people ought to feel free to read those, because I think it would inform many in the chamber.

I have just asked the clerks, in particular Annemarie, to lay out some times on the production of documents here. The shortest in this recent period, in the last few years – and this goes back to the 59th Parliament – was one on 10 May, production of documents, John Woodman, and that debate went for 9 minutes. The others in that Parliament: 46, 43, 29. But in this Parliament, there has been a trend to see these time lines creeping up significantly – up to 1 hour and 19 minutes, 1 hour and 39 minutes and such like. Noting the earlier periods where quite short debate times were all that was necessary, I think that a 20-minute debate is a reasonable period of time. The limiting of the number of short-form documents motions to two in any general business session is a reasonable approach to adopt.

As I have laid out, there is a very simple set of steps here. The member who is moving that motion would, when they are reading it out, advise that they want the documents motion – and they would still be able to do a longer form motion – and would seek a short-form motion, and that would be alerted to the house at the time when it is moved. Then the shorter time periods would apply, and the motion would be put. The standard rules about how the government responds would apply, and the rest of the chapter 10 production of documents rules would be unchanged in that respect.

So it is a very modest motion, as I say. It seeks to streamline the approach there to enable the house to move through somewhat more in the way that it did traditionally. I think people used to aim for 10-minute sessions, but 20 minutes seems very reasonable. It enables people to have time to put on the public record the arguments for or against, or why the release of a particular document or set of documents is in the public interest – or indeed if people are opposing a motion, why it is not. So that is the purpose of this modest sessional order change.

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (16:56): I am very pleased to make a contribution with respect to Mr Davis's proposed motion to amend the sessional orders to change the procedures – or introduce new procedures, I suppose it is fair to say, rather than change existing procedures. I would not want to mischaracterise the proposal before us. It would add an additional form of debate in the chamber to consider an expedited or shorter form – as it has been described here – mechanism to do debates on documents motions in the house.

Mr Davis is correct in his assessment and characterisation of the historical powers that the chamber has with respect to requesting either people or documents be provided to the house in order to satisfy us as members of Parliament about matters that we think are within the public interest, and that is a topic and a central feature of the important role that Parliament plays in holding executive government accountable. No matter who sits where on what side of this chamber, it is a principle that we all should agree with, because it is a fundamental role of the Parliament to act as part of our democratic institutions to hold executive government appropriately accountable. No-one is disputing that. I think the question before us today is: what is the appropriate way for the procedure of requests for the production of documents to be considered by the chamber?

It is fair to say I am relatively new to this place, so I am learning much about its ways of doing business, its idiosyncrasies and its charms. Is that all right, President? Not unparliamentary in any way?

Harriet Shing interjected.

Ryan BATCHELOR: 'Quirks' might be a bit too pejorative from where I am coming from; 'charms' is probably more appropriate. But also one of the things I am learning is that we are fond of establishing mechanisms to assess how we should do things, and one of them obviously is the Procedure Committee of this place, which has in its remit the delightful task of discussing matters of procedure.

Harriet Shing: It is content-rich.

Ryan BATCHELOR: An absolutely content-rich place, I am sure.

Given the fact that this chamber took the important decision to establish such a committee, I probably feel like it is beholden upon the chamber to have matters seeking to amend our standing and sessional orders and to change the procedures of the house be considered by and come from that committee as recommendations. It is not clear in the contribution that Mr Davis has made today or more broadly whether that normal, standard practice has been followed in this instance. As someone who I know is a stickler for the adherence to good practice in this house, I am sure it is just a mere oversight on Mr Davis's part that that is not the way this particular motion has come forward. I would have thought that it may have benefited from a more fulsome discussion in the Procedure Committee prior to his moving it in the chamber in this way.

David Davis: It's not a standing order, it's just a sessional order.

Ryan BATCHELOR: I am still thinking that it might be something that could benefit from an approach that is one where these matters can be discussed and people can sit and deliberate on whether they would add value to the standing and sessional orders. That has not been done, and that is probably a good enough reason to suggest that we should not be supporting the motion before the chamber today.

The proposal itself would introduce two new procedures: what is described as a short-form documents motion, where a member can propose to have the motion debated for a maximum of 20 minutes; and then an alternative version, I suspect, called a short-form documents motion without debate, where matters can be put –

David Davis: That's not the notice here.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Isn't it?

David Davis: No, it's only the first one.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Okay. This is just the first of the two. I will keep myself to the first: to say that we have got 20 minutes for debate on a documents motion and that is it. Mr Davis was saying that the practice in the past was for debates in this chamber to be shorter than they currently are as a justification for saying that 20 minutes is enough time for members from the opposition, government and the various interests of the crossbench to participate in a debate and that the mover can speak for 6 minutes and everyone else can get up to 5. So in a 20-minute debate you effectively get four opportunities to speak, which is not, I think, enough to represent the interests of everyone in this place. What we would be doing by supporting this is potentially disenfranchising some members from participating in the debate if they either believed or did not believe that the Council, the chamber, should be exercising one of its significant powers, which is to compel the production of documents from the executive.

By establishing the historical importance of having such a power, as Mr Davis did in his contribution, we think it should be beholden upon him in the way that he proposes that power get exercised and the time limits and the constraints that are placed upon it in the terms of the motion before us today that the proposed procedure respects the significance of that power. By placing a time limit on the debate, by constraining members' ability to contribute by placing such a time limit of 20 minutes on that debate, it does not do that. It may be in a circumstance where people are asked to come into the chamber as the bells are rung and vote on a motion that they have not been given the opportunity to put their perspective on. I am not sure that that is the sort of environment that we want to be creating in this place.

I have nowhere near as much experience in the chamber as Mr Davis, but in the short time that I have been here we have clearly been a place where we have seen people be able to have their say. It is not just one from the government, one from the opposition and then the motion gets voted on, or in the case of the proposal here, one mover and then everyone takes their allotted time, which is 5 minutes – not a lot of time to make a contribution on the exercise of a significant historical power. They may not

be able to have their voice heard in a debate, and then they would be expected to come in and vote on the motion.

There are clearly some procedural aspects of the proposal that have not been properly thought through that do require probably more consideration than that which has been given in the way that this proposal has been put forward to us today. Given some of the difficulties that we have seen from Mr Davis today – getting things out in the right kind of way, asking the right kinds of questions – we probably think that there might be a bit of complexity in here that we need to have a bit more of a look at. It should be properly considered. It is not something that the government will be supporting in its current form in this way. We think that the standing orders of the house provide for production of documents motions to be considered and debated, and they often are, so there is really in our view no case for this motion today, and I am happy to have spoken in opposition to it.

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (17:06): I rise to speak on this motion and will not be supporting it. We have seen a variety of motions put forward by those opposite, many by Mr Davis himself in this shorter slot that we have at the end of general business on Wednesdays. I have to confess that I was very much looking forward to having further debate on bringing the SBS to Dandenong. I am waiting for the day, Mr Davis, that we can discuss that.

David Davis: I want to bring that on. We'll try and bring that back. I'm keen to get it back.

Michael GALEA: I will hold you to that. I am very excited to talk about bringing the SBS to Victoria. We sometimes do agree; it is nice for people to see. Perhaps my colleague Mr Tarlamis in particular will agree with me that there is no better place in Australia for the SBS to be than in Dandenong, so we will continue to prosecute this campaign most vigorously.

The motion we have before us today is motion 207 in regard to the standing orders. I will acknowledge from the outset the contribution from my colleague Mr Batchelor. I think he has very well articulated the reasons why I as well will not be supporting it. To briefly go into what this motion would seek, firstly, I understand, and I will be corrected as well, that this is just the with-debate motion; this is not the without-debate motion. Is that correct? It is just the 20-minute one, so the motion for 20 minutes. In Mr Davis's contribution he referred to the opportunity for members to succinctly talk about these issues. I hope in good spirit Mr Davis will understand why I have some trepidation about anything that has been described as succinct by him, as I would not necessarily ascribe that word to him in this chamber.

I appreciate, as said, the opportunity to address this. I will pick up where I believe Mr Batchelor left off – that the opportunity for all to have their say in this place is something that is very important. One of the quirks that we have – surely not quirky members but the quirkiness of the house that we are in – is that we do all have the opportunity. I mean, this is not, after all, the Legislative Assembly. Who would want to be there?

I will also pick up on an interjection that Mr Davis put forward during Mr Batchelor's contribution, which was to say, 'It's not a standing order; it's just a sessional order.' Now, standing order or sessional order, whichever it is, I do not think that changes the seriousness with which we need to approach this, and I would caution against a cavalier or slapdash approach to changing the sessional orders in this manner, even if it is not changing the standing orders as well.

I would say the sessional orders for all intents and purposes, at least until late 2026, will be what we are operating under in this place. So I do urge some caution there, and I do think as well it is important that people in this chamber, as I mentioned, do have their say thoroughly. I do not know whether the forecast will be for a 5-minute debate per member, which would allow four people. I sort of said it in jest earlier, but it would be 30-second debates if every member in the chamber wanted to have their say, but that is part of the reason why I do not quite see how this would be workable. We have a procedure already under the standing and sessional orders for us to have these debates on documents motions, and we have had many of them. We have had many of them this year. We have had some

that I believe have gone through and some others that have not gone through, which is all part and parcel of the rigour with which we engage ourselves in this chamber. If that were to be changed, for that to be taken away, I do not immediately see the value.

I also do not immediately see the value of this motion in terms of our priorities. I know those of us on this side often like to aerate our views on various local projects and local initiatives. I obviously like to talk about the Topirum primary school that we are building in Clyde North right now. I like to talk about the level crossings that we are removing, making the Pakenham, Cranbourne and Frankston lines level crossing free by the end of the decade. I like to talk about all sorts of things. I also talk about a certain heritage tree in Beaconsfield quite a bit as well. But these are all things that have come to me from the local community that community members have spoken to me about, in some cases very passionately, and this is what is so beautiful about this place, this chamber in particular, I might add – that we do have the time to fully prosecute the arguments and the debates. Whether it be for something that is of statewide significance – we have had many of those in the last few weeks of sitting as well – or whether it be something that is really important to a particular part of one of the local communities that we represent, that is what makes this place quirky, yes, but also beautiful.

I am not quite sure if we are seeing that same representation from the community – I am not sure how many people have been approaching their members of this place saying, ‘I think we need a new way of doing documents motions in the Legislative Council.’ In my South-Eastern Metropolitan Region I am quite confident that no-one has said that to me, and I could reasonably say that people have not raised that with Mr Tarlamis, Ms Payne, Mr Limbrick and Mrs Hermans as well. I will happily be corrected if anyone in the South-Eastern Metropolitan Region has raised this as a priority for them in this Parliament.

I do not represent the Southern Metropolitan Region, and I will be the first to admit that. Their needs may well be very different, and they may well have raised that with Mr Davis. Frankly I still suspect not, but I think it reinforces the point that on this side of the chamber we do like to engage. We obviously legislate and deal with bills from our side and on Wednesdays indeed motions and bills from members of the opposition and members from the crossbench as well. We have seen today, as with every sitting Wednesday, another mixed array of motions that we have dealt with. I think ‘mixed’ is quite a mild way of putting it, and again that is the beauty of this place. We deal with matters of state, matters of importance to our regions and matters of importance to our state, and I think that is what we should be focusing on.

It is for those reasons too that I think we should absolutely be bringing on debate on bringing the SBS to Victoria, because I know for my region that is something that people really do want to see – some proper representation from our second national public broadcaster that represents multicultural Australia from the heartland of multicultural Australia, and that is the south-eastern suburbs.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

Statements on tabled papers and petitions

Road safety camera commissioner

Report 2021–22

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (17:15): Tonight I want to talk about the road safety camera commissioner annual report 2021–22, and I rise today to speak on the exceptional work done by the Allan Labor government to reduce injuries and deaths on Victorian roads, as highlighted in the recent report from the Victorian road safety camera commissioner Mr Neville Taylor APM. I commend the work of the former Minister for Police Minister Neville and the former Minister for Roads and Road Safety in the other place Minister Carroll for assisting the work of Mr Taylor in producing the road safety camera commissioner annual report 2021–22. I would also like to acknowledge the work of my colleagues in Parliament the Minister for Police in the other place

Minister Carbines and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in the other place Minister Horne in supporting the ongoing execution of our government's strategy on road safety.

Countless Victorians have faced the devastating impacts of road trauma. Too many loved ones have been lost to driving accidents. In 2023 the death toll is sitting at 225 as of midnight 15 October and up from 196 last year. Tragically, many of these accidents were entirely preventable. It is imperative that we have effective deterrence measures in place on our roads to prevent this. Road safety cameras make a big difference. An expansive and fit-for-purpose road safety camera network is a vital precursory measure to decrease reckless and illegal driving behaviour on our roads, and our government is committed to increasing public confidence in our programs.

In March 2021 our government fully endorsed the recommendations of the inquiry into the increase in Victoria's 2019 road toll to improve public confidence in the speed camera system. As community representatives, we know that building trust within our community is integral for the success of these programs. That is why our government is committed to the three pillars of the road safety program: integrity, transparency and community confidence.

We have invested heavily in improving technology and accuracy, installing new camera networks and ensuring the timely publication of camera data. As such, I draw upon the annual report to highlight what our government is doing to reduce road trauma and fatalities. Distracted drivers are a major contribution to serious and fatal collisions in the state, and the Allan Labor government has invested \$33.7 million in new camera technology as part of the *Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030* to detect illegal mobile phone use and seatbelt offences. Enforcement by these cameras began on 1 July 2023, and throughout July and August almost 15,000 offences were detected over 6000 camera hours. Drivers caught using mobile phones or portable devices will face a fine of \$577 and a loss of four demerit points. Drivers or passengers detected not using or wearing their seatbelts correctly will receive a \$385 fine and lose three demerit points. We have also committed \$49 million to installing fixed cameras at 35 dangerous intersections sites and two point-to-point highway camera systems.

Fixed digital cameras are also being tested and certified annually. Cameras found to be non-compliant with maintenance standards are deactivated immediately and undergo diligent verification before reactivation. Since the publication of the report the department now has replaced all analog red-light cameras with digital cameras, as promised, and the upgrade of the Hume Highway instantaneous point-to-point road safety camera network is steadily underway, with the completion of two of those new sites extending the network to Seymour and Euroa. I applaud the incredible work of all parties involved in upgrading the network and the Allan Labor government for our significant investment in these projects.

These numerous advancements in our road safety camera network will undoubtedly save thousands of lives over the next few decades through the publication of speed camera information on the Department of Justice and Community Safety's Cameras Save Lives website, including infringement statistics, regularly updated camera site lists and an opportunity for the public to submit nominations for cameras in their community. Our government is committed to ensuring that the public has faith in our camera network.

I commend the tireless work of the road safety camera commissioner, the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Allan Labor government, who are saving lives on our roads. By ensuring all three key pillars of integrity, transparency and community confidence in our road safety camera programs, we have shown our commitment to reducing deaths on Victorian roads. As the former branch secretary of the transport union's Vic/Tas branch and president of the national union, I have dedicated my life to safety, the proper functioning of our roads and those who use them. Road transport is Australia's deadliest industry, and in my new role in the Victorian Parliament I will continue to fight for safe freight, safe roads and safe skies, because no family should be left without a loved one. I commend the report to the floor.

Department of the Legislative Council*Overdue government responses to standing committee reports*

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (17:20): I rise to speak on the ‘Overdue government responses to standing committee reports’ document tabled by your good self, President, on 31 August this year. I think all of us in this house are aware that the government’s allergy to scrutiny extends to Council committee reports and recommendations, so I was surprised to see just how short the President’s statement was: just four sentences long, less than half an A4 side. That was the first alarm bell. I can agree with the first of the sentences:

Standing Orders require the appropriate responsible Minister to provide the Council with a Government response to a Council committee report’s recommendations within six months of the report being tabled.

So I naturally expected a lengthy list. I know personally that two important inquiries have not received the courtesy of a reply, which is indefensible really when you consider the extraordinary time and effort gone to by witnesses, presenters, MPs and particularly house, Hansard and committee staff. The Environment and Planning Committee’s *Inquiry into the Health Impacts of Air Pollution in Victoria* report was tabled on 18 November 2021, and its *Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria* report followed on 2 December 2021. The government has responded to neither. While not personally involved, I note also the Legal and Social Issues Committee’s *Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria* report, tabled 4 March 2021, and its *Inquiry into the Use of Cannabis in Victoria* report, tabled 5 August 2021, have also not been responded to by government. Is the failure to reply just based on political sensitivity? Can the government not agree with their new friends and allies in the upper house on these matters? It is not as if they are unimportant matters. Housing in particular the government now claims has priority number one. Perhaps the new Minister for Housing can prove this apparent concern by expediting a response to the committee, which is now more than two years overdue.

The real point of my contribution, however, is to note that the President mentioned none of these reports. He wrote, and this is the key part:

As at 31 August 2023, there are no Government responses that were due to be provided and have not been provided in the preceding 12 months.

Those overdue matters have simply disappeared, been erased from the record. Is this how the Labor government operates? If something goes past a year overdue, it falls off the late list. I guess that explains their approach to major projects cancelled, postponed or simply years overdue. The West Gate Tunnel project is just one example. By the President’s reckoning it would not count as overdue. With Labor the mantra is ‘It’s so late it’s no longer late.’ We could add hospital waiting lists, pothole repairs, FOI inquiries, even the multiple apologies from our past and present Premiers. They just have to brazen it out for 12 months and the matters get scraped from the list. We taxpayers can only hope – we live in hope – for our own sake and for the sake of all Victorian taxpayers that the state of Victoria’s creditors take the same approach when the debts become due.

In all seriousness, President, I appreciate you complying with the letter of standing order 23.23(4), but I am sure you would not personally endorse this kind of political sophistry. Perhaps it is time for the rule to be changed.

Select Committee on Victoria’s Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements*Inquiry into Victoria’s Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements*

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (17:24): I rise today to speak on another report which was tabled on 31 August this year, and I confess I got excited for a moment thinking that Mrs McArthur and I were talking about the same report. But I of course refer to –

Bev McArthur: There are many.

Michael GALEA: There are many, but I refer to the report on Victoria's recreational native bird hunting arrangements. I had the pleasure of being on the select committee with Mrs McArthur and other colleagues in this room, which handed down its report, on schedule, on 31 August this year. I understand the government is now considering it under the six-month window, and I do look forward to the government's response, which I am sure we will receive within the six months.

Bev McArthur: Not on this record, Mr Galea.

Michael GALEA: I am sure we will, Mrs McArthur. I hope to prove you wrong, and I am sure that we will have a good chat when I do prove you wrong. I have already provided some brief remarks in this chamber in my 2-minute speech on the 31st itself when our chair Mr Batchelor handed down the report. I do not wish to reconvene on any of those comments, I do not wish to alter them at all and I do stand by them. I do think that this is a strong report that has taken in good evidence from across the spectrum of belief and has delivered a very justifiable set of recommendations.

We all had our various contributions to the chamber, those of us who were on the committee. I am happy to be corrected, but I believe that everyone who was on the committee gave a brief report on it on that morning. But obviously a number of members, as we all like to do, trotted off to go have a chat with our friends in the media as well, and I had the opportunity to later that day observe Mr Mulholland's comments on the news, when he made the comment that, 'This is the end of the weekend.' 'This is the end of the weekend' is quite a remarkable statement. I have got to say, frankly, first of all, if you are going to start quoting Scott Morrison to Victorians and you think that is going to be an election-winning strategy, all the best to you, but I am somewhat sceptical that that might actually work for you. I found it particularly odd.

I note that Mr Mulholland is now running around the northern suburbs trying to rally against these changes, and I find it particularly interesting because one of the wonderful things about committee reports is that where there is a division on a particular subject – and of course this is a very controversial issue; we know that there is lots of division – you can actually see every single thing that we as members of the committee vote on. It is a good process, and along with other colleagues – I note some colleagues were unable to attend, including you, Mrs McArthur, and our chair Mr Batchelor – we have the opportunity to have our say and have our votes recorded as well, which I think is very important for the democratic process that committees are of course a key part of.

I would draw Mr Mulholland's attention to a vote that he cast, which is on page 220 of this report. It relates to a recommendation that was in the report that ultimately was taken out based on this vote:

Katherine Copsey moved, omit Recommendation 5: That the Game Management Authority should focus on supporting and expanding game hunting for non-native species, such as deer, fox and rabbit, to assist with the control of these invasive species.

It also shows you here who voted which way, so here are the people that voted against the Game Management Authority expanding game hunting for areas such as deer, fox and rabbit: Melina Bath, Jeff Bourman, Katherine Copsey, Evan Mulholland and Georgie Purcell. The noes: Michael Galea. I think if Mr Mulholland is going to go and talk to hunters and say that he is on their side he needs to be up-front with them and say that he actually voted against the expansion of hunting rights for deer, fox, rabbit and other invasive species. I think it is important that he not try and be disingenuous with the people he is speaking to when he does go and gallivant around trying to whip up support against this report's recommendations.

I will leave my remarks there. There is much more to say on this report and many other different chapters and many other parts of evidence that were looked at, but I will leave my contribution there, and I am happy to engage Mr Mulholland on the matter at any time.

Department of Treasury and Finance*Budget papers 2023–24*

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (17:29): I rise to speak on the state budget, which raises the budget for the housing portfolio, and this is an area where the government like to talk big but where they are actually failing Victorians significantly. The public housing or social housing waiting list now has reached 65,195 applicants. But it is not the total that I want to talk about it, because it is not the register of interest people; I want to talk particularly about the access to priority housing, which has reached 36,690 families waiting for priority housing. Now, when we were in the government that figure was at 9990, and I thought that was far too long and was working to get that down. But we are now at four times the figure it was when we were in government.

These are people who are escaping domestic violence, who are homeless, who are living with a disability or who have a special housing need. What we know is that not only are there more people on the list but people are actually waiting longer for housing in this state as well. Budget paper 3 on page 192 reveals that if you are trying to escape domestic violence you will be waiting an average of 20.2 months to be housed. That is dreadful, and that is the expected outcome for the 2022–23 year. The target is 10.5 months. That is bad enough, but imagine if you are living in fear for your life in a domestic violence situation and the state says to you, ‘Oh, look, you’ve got to wait almost two years before we’re going to give you housing.’ In other categories, for people who are homeless, people living with a disability and people who have a special housing need, they are waiting an average of 16.5 – or 16½ – months. That is the expected outcome for this year when the target was 10.5 months. This government is failing badly.

I would like to talk about some of the priority lists in my own area. What we know is that this government has become really secretive with housing information, and the waiting lists are now being published very late. They used to be published by the end of the first month after the end of the quarter, but now we are having to wait to the end of the following quarter, so the June figures only came out at the end of September. And what we saw in my region was a significant increase in families on the priority list waiting list.

In the Bendigo local government area we saw an increase of 48 families, rising to a total of 2194 families waiting on the priority list only – those who are escaping domestic violence, who are homeless, who are living with a disability or who have a special housing need. 2194 families – what a disgrace. In Benalla it went up by 42 to 406 families. In the flood-affected areas in Campaspe it went up by 58 to reach 1265 families waiting for priority access to housing. In Greater Shepparton it went up by 72 families – interestingly Merrigum and Murchison went down by two families each and Shepparton itself went up by 76 families – to reach 1549 families waiting on the waiting list in the Greater Shepparton area for priority housing. In Indigo the priority housing list rose by 14 families to 169 families waiting for priority access. In the Macedon Ranges there are 754 families waiting for priority access; in Mildura, another flood-affected area, an increase of 39 families to reach 1029 families waiting for priority access to housing; in the Mitchell shire, another severely flood-affected area, an extra 37 families to reach 906 families waiting on the priority list; in Moira, another flood-affected area, an increase of 45 to reach 616 families; in Murrindindi, an extra 16 families to reach 139 families; in Wangaratta, an extra 71 to reach 575 families; and in Wodonga, an extra 28 families to reach 719 families.

These are all waiting for priority access. They are trying to escape domestic violence. They are homeless and sleeping on the riverbanks. They are living with disabilities or they have special housing needs, and yet this government is prepared to just let them languish on the social housing waiting list while it does very little to deliver social housing in regional areas. We are not getting our fair share. More than 25 per cent of those on the housing waiting list are waiting for access in regional Victoria, but the government only ever say they will deliver 25 per cent of the houses in country Victoria, and they are delivering nothing.

Department of Treasury and Finance*Budget papers 2023–24*

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (17:34): My statement is on the budget papers 2023–24, and it relates to timber worker and industry support, referencing page 31 of budget paper 3. Native timber harvesters have had their industry pulled out from under them. They were slated under this government to close by 2030, something that the Nationals and the Liberals certainly opposed in the strongest of terms. But earlier this year the government said, ‘No, no, we’ve decided to cut you off at the knees. We’re shutting you down come the end of this year.’ A draft package has been presented to them and their stakeholder group, Australian Forest Contractors Association, AFCA. There are a number of different pathways that these haulage and harvest contractors can look into or adopt. But they are appalling – all of them.

Pathway 1 is that you can novate your VicForests contract, and contractors can move over into five-year contracts to undertake forest and fire management works for the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. That sounds reasonable in theory, but there is no detail on arrangements. They do not know what their remuneration is. They do not know what the work is. These are experienced professionals with particularly expensive and technical machinery. They do not know if they are going to be blowing leaf blowers along the pavement or whether they are going to be out on the Princes Highway cutting large trees down to make sure that there is a buffer along the Princes Highway, for example. They do not know where they are going to work. They have to apply for their contract, but they do not know about the suitability or viability of it. They will be flying blind.

Pathway 2 is for haulage and harvest compensation. They will be compensated for the loss of income, but it is unjust, unfair and lacking. For machinery compensation, the government will pay the difference between the 2020 market value and the auction value today. However – and this is the kicker – the department have the right in this proposed draft to decide that, if they do not want to meet that difference, they just will not. The bottom line is this draft compensation is about budget, not fair compensation. If they do not want to pay that difference, the government have the right not to. It is capped and it is unfair.

In relation to redundant employees – so those people who work for the contractors who are now going to go onto the unemployment line – the government has said that these redundant employees will receive 10 days of training. I think I may have even heard the former Minister for Agriculture talk about this 10 days of training. But who would pay for that? Who do you think should pay for that? Well, we think the government should pay for it, but in actual fact the government is lumping that responsibility back onto the contractors, the employers, who are now being made redundant themselves – so, yes to training but no to the forest contractors, who are now going to have to pick up the tab. This government is forcing the closure of the native timber industry, but this is an appalling document and it needs to be reworked.

Pathway 3 is the standdown rate. They have continued on with their VicForests standdown rate until June 2024, but there are more questions than there are answers. There are contradictions about that whole document.

During Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings recently on this budget, then Premier Daniel Andrews said to Danny O’Brien:

My commitment to you is –

I am quoting PAEC –

if we have to go further beyond this \$200 million and beyond that \$875 million, then we will.

Daniel Andrews, again, said:

Wrap around these communities auto industry transition-type support, like the car industry stuff we did.

These people have served us over decades in times of bushfires. These people have invested millions of dollars to support an industry that kept communities alive and hardwood timber not only in our state but internationally, and this government is closing them down. It needs to rework this draft compensation package.

Victorian Auditor-General's Office

Eloque: the Joint Venture between DoT and Xerox

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (17:39): Today I want to draw the chamber's attention to the extraordinary Victorian Auditor-General's Office report – and I pay tribute to their work – on Eloque, the joint venture between the department of transport and Xerox. This independent assurance audit I think is a ripper. They have done very good work. They have really dug down hard to find out what has gone on, where and why.

And it is a shocker – a shocker. Jacinta Allan, now Premier, at the time the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, was responsible for VicTrack and for Transport through some of that period too. She was responsible for Mr Campbell Rose, the CEO, and the board. These people went, dare I say, right off track. They decided that they would do this joint venture with Eloque and Xerox. They got \$20 million. I note the question on notice that we put on the 26th of the 5th, 2020, which asked Jacinta Allan about some of this money, and \$50,000 was allocated as early money from the Public Sector Innovation Fund. The trial budget was \$2 million, but they went much further than that. They would not at the time provide us with the details of the concept trial. They refused. They said that was commercial-in-confidence. But they did go and establish a small holding company, which was an extraordinary step, to cover who was actually in charge of Eloque, and that holding company was – let me read this. And I note that the VicTrack board did not meet for eight months at one period, as Mr Rose went right off the track, with the minister's active connivance and support. He did not use a competitive process. I am quoting here from page 4 of the report:

Mr Rose concurrently held roles at VicTrack, HoldCo and Eloque. They were:

- CE, VicTrack
- interim CEO, Eloque –

the new company –

- company secretary and public officer, HoldCo –

which was the company that oversaw that, a wholly owned state government company –

- corporate representative and proxy for the government shareholder – Head, TfV.

But what he did whilst all that was happening is he set up a superannuation or a special shareholding arrangement and bonuses that were to be paid. And let me just say one thing: he was to be the beneficiary. So it is a real ripper. Let me make one other point that I think is very, very important:

... HoldCo did not address these issues –

the ones that are raised by the audit report –

or raise these matters with DoT or the minister. Members of the HoldCo and VicTrack boards told us that this was because they understood the share scheme –

this strange share scheme –

as a future plan for permanent employees would involve staff seconded from VicTrack.

So they were all going to help themselves to this. The problem was that the technology was not mature. It was known not to be mature at that time. But one of the most concerning things, again on page 14 of the report, is:

While VicTrack's June 2020 submission asked government to note its decision to invest \$32.5 million of its own funds –

let us be clear, the total loss is more than \$20 million of state government money, taxpayers money –

the VicTrack board only committed to contributing the funding in February 2021, following receipt of the minister's –

statement of expectations. Who was that minister? It was Jacinta Allan. She gave the green light. She gave the tick. She said, 'You go ahead with this technology company,' and let us be clear what this technology company was meant to do. It was meant to have these precision electronic things to check the strength of bridges all around the state. No orders ever came from anywhere else around the world. Queensland actually looked at it and they rejected it. They said that the technology was not mature. But Victoria ploughed the money into this extraordinary company, a private company in which the CEO of VicTrack was also the key mover, and then they were establishing this special shareholding. I mean, this is an absolutely corrupt shocker, and Jacinta Allan allowed this overt corruption to occur. There is no break. In fact, she green-lighted this corruption, and let us call it for what it is.

Adjournment

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (17:44): I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Housing affordability

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (17:44): (513) My adjournment is to the Minister for Housing, and the action I am seeking is an update and further detail on the government's housing statement and how it will tackle the issue of long-term housing affordability in the Southern Metropolitan Region. We know that right across Victoria finding an affordable home is becoming harder than ever before, and having a stable and secure home gives you a solid base to hold down a job and get a good education and keep your family safe. Victoria is a fast-growing state; our population is set to surpass 10 million by 2051. To ease the housing pressure that Victorians are facing it is becoming more important than ever to build additional social and affordable homes right across the state. The government's housing statement is not just an investment in building – and an investment in buildings – it is going to change lives by giving people a place to live and the security that comes with it.

In order to tackle the issue of housing supply and affordability the government is having to take a range of actions on multiple fronts. It is not just one thing that is going to get us there. We are going to need to reform the planning system to clear the backlog of planning permits, unlock new spaces to stop the urban sprawl, protect renters rights by closing down loopholes that drive up the cost of renting, rapidly accelerate the construction of more social and affordable homes and deliver a long-term plan that works for and with Victorians, not against them. We have got to build more housing closer to where we have the transport infrastructure, the roads, the hospitals and the schools, and the government has certainly been investing record amounts in improving that existing infrastructure. Those are the things that people need, and they need them near their homes. We are also going to make it easier for builders and buyers and renovators to get permits, which will help accelerate the expansion of our existing housing stock to accommodate more people, in particular making it easier to put a second home on the back of a block – a granny flat, if you will. We know that so many want to be able to do this and are often hamstrung by regulations preventing them from doing it.

We have set an ambitious target of building more than 800,000 new homes across Victoria in coming decades. It is a big job, and it is an important job. But this is the sort of action that the state needs, that people in this state need, in order to ensure that we have the supply of houses that our growing population needs and that we are building them close to jobs, close to infrastructure and close to schools and hospitals. This is exactly what the state government should be doing.

Shepparton sports and events centre

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (17:48): (514) My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Regional Development, and it concerns the continued lack of funding for the Shepparton sports and events centre. The action that I seek is for the minister to provide the state government's funding share of \$20 million towards the total \$60 million redevelopment of the Shepparton sports and events stadium. The Shepparton Sports City precinct is home to world-class facilities for a range of different sports, with many facilities being of such high standard that Shepparton regularly hosts national and international sporting events. However, the final component of the precinct is the Shepparton sports and events centre, which remains unfunded.

The current 1970s stadium building is past its use-by and does not fully cater for the thousands of local residents who access it on a daily basis. The condition of the stadium means Shepparton is being overlooked as a venue for tournaments and other events. Our young people deserve better facilities to play on, but we also need facilities that will attract exhibition games with top athletes in our city. The council could not even use this facility as a relief centre during the floods because the roof leaks.

Greater Shepparton City Council has repeatedly identified the stadium as a high-priority infrastructure project which has the potential to create significant jobs for the local community and contribute to the growing local economy. Basketball Victoria has also identified this project as their number one infrastructure project. Redevelopment of the stadium would involve the demolition of the current early-1970s facility to be replaced with a new sports and events centre with six basketball–netball multi-use courts, including a 3000-seat show court; new wet area amenities; an administration hub, entry and cafe; and external works, including car parking.

A cost–benefit analysis which was conducted on the project found that the redevelopment would have a total local benefit output of \$68 million while creating a total of 235 jobs for the local community during the construction of the site. Redevelopment of the stadium will also increase the amount of events attracted to the region, with an expected increase of 24,000 visitors to Greater Shepparton each year, which will increase visitor spending in the region by around \$12.3 million annually, helping to support 89 full-time equivalent jobs per annum. The state government has contributed funding for similar projects in other regional and metropolitan centres across Victoria, including election commitments of \$50 million for Waurn Ponds, \$20 million for Mernda, \$15 million for both Frankston and Benalla and in the past \$82 million in Knox, \$17 million in Traralgon and \$9 million in Ballarat. I have been advocating this for some time, and it is time the government funded this project.

Sunshine super-hub

Samantha RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (17:51): (515) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and my ask is that they outline the plans for the Sunshine precinct, including redevelopment plans for Sunshine and Albion train stations. In 2021 the state government announced a plan for the Sunshine precinct to become the centre of Melbourne's booming west, providing key opportunities to boost employment, investment and livability through planning, underpinned by transport connections to Melbourne's CBD, Melbourne Airport rail, the Suburban Rail Loop and the regional rail network. The community largely welcomed the redevelopment but had serious reservations around some design aspects and the level of community participation in the design and decision-making.

The government has thus far failed to disclose to the public what options were considered and properly justify why one was selected over another. The local community in the Albion and Sunshine areas will

have to live with the result of this significant project for years to come and should be afforded the opportunity to participate in any changes to the current plan given the direct impact on them. The government has not undertaken any genuine public consultation regarding this project and has restricted the information available publicly, and furthermore the participants of the community reference group are required to sign non-disclosure agreements.

As a way forward, the Greater Sunshine Community Alliance are proposing that an integrated transport and precinct development plan be developed that is guided by an independent expert panel review. The community would also welcome the opportunity to participate in any changes to the current plan, informed by the key decisions on options made previously, given the direct long-term impact on the community. The most recent decision by the Victorian government to shelve plans for the airport rail is yet another blow to communities in the west who are starved of adequate public transport. There is now an opportunity for the government to demonstrate genuine and meaningful engagement with the local community and develop a plan that is best for all stakeholders and the community involved.

Hanukkah

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (17:52): (516) My adjournment is for the new Minister for Multicultural Affairs Minister Stitt. It has been a devastating week for my community of Southern Metro. The electorate is home to Australia's largest Jewish community and one of the world's largest diasporas of Holocaust survivors and their descendants. Many in my community have family members in Israel. Many were just minutes or even seconds away from danger. My own staff member Zac is Jewish, and his father is from Israel. He has spoken to me about the personal effects of this. It has been even more devastating to see many in the Jewish community who have been afraid to go to school or to be open and proud of their Judaism and scared to go into their own city. We must fight bigotry, support our Jewish community and celebrate and promote their culture and beliefs.

That is why today I want to talk about the celebration of the Hanukkah festival of Pillars of Light. The festival features the lighting of the menorah tradition, music and dance performances, delicious food and various activities for people of all ages. It brings together families, friends and communities to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of our Jewish citizens. That is why I was proud that in the 2023–24 budget the Andrews Labor government committed to investing \$400,000 in this festival over four years. Victoria is multicultural, and Australia is a multicultural country. We are made up of a vibrant tapestry of cultures, religions and traditions. When we promote an environment where all individuals are welcomed and embraced, we strengthen the relationships and connections we make with one another. That unites us all together.

Hanukkah is a cheerful time for the Jewish community worldwide, and this year it will be particularly poignant. The festival reminds the Jewish people of their resilience and their perseverance throughout history. It commemorates the miracle of the oil in the Temple of Jerusalem. The menorah or candelabrum with nine branches is one of the central symbols of Hanukkah. The central candle is known as the shamash. The ritual of lighting the candle symbolises the spreading of light and the power of faith to dispel darkness. This serves as a beacon of hope and unity for both the Jewish community and our society at large. It serves as a reminder of the importance of taking care of our cultural heritage while encouraging an inclusive society. That is why the action I seek is for the minister to join me at the festival later this year. I know her presence would be deeply felt and appreciated by the Jewish community. The celebration of Hanukkah is embodied by principles of tolerance, understanding and respect, and its support will go a long way to building social harmony. It will send a powerful message of solidarity and support, which has never been more important.

Timber industry

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (17:55): (517) I am continuing on my theme from reports during my adjournment. My adjournment matter this evening is for the Treasurer, and it relates to the Treasurer because it is about uncapping the cap on the haulage and harvest forest contractors

compensation. This actually cuts across at least three different ministers – the Minister for Environment in terms of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, the Minister for Agriculture in terms of redundant VicForests contracts – but all of it has to do with funding, so I am directing my request to the Treasurer.

We have seen that there is a draft report out for compensation to the native timber harvesters who are being forced into closure. We see that there are some major flaws in this. Certainly one of the main ones is in relation to option 2, where the government should look at taking the market value of very expensive equipment and machinery and the auction value now – the market value in 2020, the auction value now – and paying the fair difference. What we see is the clause says that they reserve the right to pay less. We see the compensation where the employer, who is having their whole livelihood cut asunder, has the responsibility to pay for employee retraining. All of those will endorse retraining, but the onus should be on the current government to fund that.

There are also many questions about if there are going to be sufficient funds, and we see that the \$200 million is there as a cap. I am asking the Treasurer to uncap that to provide sufficient funds so that there is fair compensation. Get rid of this atrocious first-round draft and also make sure that there is extensive consultation with industry stakeholders, with the contractors affected and their employees. I go back to a quote from the then Premier in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. He said to Danny O'Brien:

My commitment to you is: if we have to go further beyond this \$200 million ... then we will.

I call on the Treasurer to uphold that commitment.

Cost of living

Aiv PUGLIELLI (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (17:58): (518) My adjournment matter is for the Treasurer, and the action that I seek is that he introduce price controls on everyday supermarket items to stop price gouging and to ensure that essential food and other items are affordable to all Victorians. The Treasurer Comrade Pallas has had a lot of negative things to say whenever the Greens have called on the Labor government to directly address the cost-of-living crisis and help struggling Victorians, but I think Comrade Pallas and others in this place may be a little confused about our point of view, so I just thought I would spend some time now explaining it.

Profits have gone up for the supermarket giants Coles and Woolworths, and with prices rising at an alarming rate at the check-out, many people are left asking, 'How do profits increase when price hikes on groceries are being blamed on inflation or supply costs?' We hear about inflation all the time, yet absurd price increases due to and above the rate of inflation have a real-world impact on people. That impact matters far more than scare tactics around command economies that you label us with in this place simply for wanting reasonable action. That is what we care about: the real-world impact that this has on people. I have mentioned this before, but the Greens conducted a survey, and of the 1200-odd people, around 70 per cent of those respondents reported that their mental health has been negatively impacted by cost-of-living pressures, with food affordability being one of the main struggles that they have faced.

When the people we represent are struggling to this degree, the government has a responsibility to step in. If Victorians cannot afford basic grocery items because the cost is far beyond what people can reasonably afford whilst the private companies make billions in profit and implement extremely concerning surveillance practices, what is the point of the government if not to step in and regulate it? It is clear you cannot trust a private business in charge of delivering an essential good to do the right thing without regulation. Even Labor agrees with that. We have the Essential Services Commission and the Victorian default offer and even the proposed return of the SEC – many examples of regulation on what are considered essential services. Now, I think most people would agree that food is an essential service and that people should be able to afford basic grocery items. Regulation is not a new idea, and even today Canada has announced that they are intervening in the industry to try and bring

down the cost of groceries to 'make life more affordable for Canadians'. So when the Greens are calling for intervention, for price controls, for an inquiry, it is because we want to ensure this service is accessible and affordable for everyone, because we know what happens when it is not.

Wellsprings for Women

Lee TARLAMIS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (18:01): (519) The adjournment matter I raise this evening is for my good friend the Minister for Multicultural Affairs the Honourable Ingrid Stitt. Recently I had the pleasure of launching the Wellsprings for Women pathways to volunteering for migrant and refugee women program. It is always wonderful to attend events organised by the amazing team at Wellsprings for Women, who for nearly three decades have been a beacon of support and empowerment for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds. They provide comprehensive support for women facing the challenges of resettlement in our community, assisting them to overcome the many barriers to living in a new country and helping them to find ways to apply their skills, lived experience and knowledge. As we know, the challenges faced when settling into a new country are complex and can result in a sense of loss of identity and confidence. There is no doubt it can be tough to establish connections in your community, especially when a language barrier is present, hindering your ability to apply your skills and contribute to society in the way that you would like to. The pathways to volunteering program has been developed to address exactly this.

Wellsprings brought together a group of women from migrant and refugee backgrounds with volunteering experience to co-design the program. The women discussed the challenges they had faced in settling into a new country, in finding work or volunteering roles, and the benefits volunteering had given them. The program aims to promote the value and benefits of engaging volunteer women from migrant and refugee backgrounds to foster social cohesion, build intercultural competence and create opportunities for women to develop skills and pathways to employment. It is important to recognise that many of the Wellsprings existing staff started as volunteers, and as they developed their skills and confidence they succeeded in securing paid roles. The project includes a set of videos in different languages showing volunteers describing their experiences and encouraging others to give volunteering a go. It also includes a training module for inducting and upskilling volunteers and a guide to recruit and retain volunteers from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Migrant and refugee women have continued to show a willingness to give selflessly of their time and expertise to help others in need as they have fought to overcome adversity while also displaying extraordinary courage and hope. Gaining the services of these volunteers would be an asset for any organisation, as they bring with them a range of skills and perspectives and can be a trusted face for clients from similar backgrounds and experiences. We all know the empowerment derived from volunteering is immeasurable. It can provide a sense of purpose, new connections and valuable local experience.

Wellsprings for Women has long been at the forefront of championing the rights and voices of women, particularly those from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and this is yet another project that is testament to their unwavering commitment. The secret to the success of Wellsprings is passionate people striving to make a difference in the lives of so many and the way in which they are able to connect to the people and the communities that they are working with. This enables them to develop programs that are co-designed by those who are accessing the services and can adapt to the needs of individuals, families and the community at any given time. The action I seek is for the minister to visit Wellsprings for Women in Dandenong and see firsthand the amazing work that they are doing to support women in our community and the difference they are making to the lives of so many.

Duck hunting

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (18:04): (520) My adjournment is directed towards the Minister for Outdoor Recreation, and the action I seek is for him not to accept the stitch-up report of the Select Committee on Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements. I will note that one of your own Labor members on the committee submitted a dissenting report

opposing a ban. As I have said in this place before, I have never been duck hunting and probably never will, but a lot of people do, and a lot of good working-class people do. I will also note for the minister's information that a lot of people in working-class Labor seats do, particularly marginal Labor seats. One of them is the seat of Yan Yean, where there are 2252 licensed hunters. I will note the margin of the seat is only 1683 votes. In the seat of Bass, where there are 1467 licensed hunters, the margin is only 102 votes. In the seat of Pakenham there are 683 licensed hunters, and the margin is only 154 votes. I could go on, there are plenty of other seats – Hastings: 765 licensed hunters and only 559 votes in that seat.

What I have heard from duck hunters that have spoken to me is that they are very concerned about this Labor government's forthcoming decisions, but they wanted to send a message through me that they hunt and they vote. They are very concerned about an upcoming decision, which is why I have decided to organise a forum in my electorate in the seat of Kalkallo, where there are over 1000 licensed hunters, to provide some information on duck hunting to make it known that the Liberal and National parties defend the rights of hunters. I am looking forward to welcoming Lucas Cooke, the CEO of Field and Game Australia, as well as my colleague Emma Kealy, the Deputy Leader of the Nationals. I know, and I would note for the minister's attention, that a lot of good union members are also going to be in attendance, and a lot of people from growth areas also said to me in the committee and made it known – some of these people work very long hours on places like Big Build sites, working six days a week, very long hours – that they book their leave in advance and consider it an escape from everyday life, and they take their family away to places like Gippsland or Geelong for this recreational activity. So, again, I seek the action of the minister not to accept a ridiculous ban. I am looking forward to greeting the, I think, close to 300 people that are now coming to my forum, and I want to let the minister know that we will not let him get away with a ban on duck hunting.

Duck hunting

Katherine COPSEY (Southern Metropolitan) (18:07): (521) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Outdoor Recreation in the other place. The select committee's final report on Victoria's recreational native bird hunting arrangements was handed down seven weeks ago, and we are now waiting for the government to act on its clear recommendation to ban recreational duck shooting in Victoria. Being a member of the committee was an honour. The depth of feeling and passion for protecting our native wildlife in many of the 10,402 submissions we received was humbling. It broke the record for submissions to a Victorian parliamentary inquiry, and the evidence of those submissions formed the firm basis for the committee's recommendations.

Those findings and recommendations are very clear. They are driven by the considerable evidence of long-term decline in our native bird populations and a worsening environmental outlook as our climate continues to change. The appalling animal welfare issues associated with shooting are stark and shocking and are reason enough to ban hunting now. But what became very plain from the evidence is how many other benefits will flow from this decision. Going into the committee hearings, I did not realise just how much public land is locked up every year and closed off from everyday Victorians.

The committee's recommendations were eight in number: (1) that the Victorian government ends the annual recreational native bird hunting season opening on all public and private land from 2024; (2) existing exemptions to hunt and control native birds are retained under the Authority to Control Wildlife framework to control bird populations that are impacting on agricultural and other land; (3) traditional owner hunting rights are retained under existing legislation; (4) state game reserves used for duck hunting should be converted to outdoor recreation reserves to provide greater access to outdoor recreation for all Victorians, with appropriate investment in camping, boating and related infrastructure; (5) additional resources are provided to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and Parks Victoria to better control non-native invasive species; (6) the Victorian wildlife framework is amended to discontinue the use of lead shot for all types of bird hunting and undertakes further investigation into plastic pollution and other forms of wetland degradation that result from hunting; (7) the process to report damage or destruction of Aboriginal cultural heritage is

reviewed and additional protections for these sites are introduced, including appropriate signposting and a review of the current penalties for cultural heritage destruction; lastly (8) hunters are required to participate in an Aboriginal cultural heritage awareness education program.

The committee ensured that these recommendations were grounded in fact and in evidence. They are clear and they are unambiguous, and I ask the minister to act without delay on the committee's report and ban duck hunting in Victoria from 2024.

Wire rope barriers

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (18:10): (522) My adjournment matter is for the minister for transport and returns to an old theme: the Victorian Auditor-General's report on Victoria's regional road barriers 2019–20. It might be a report the minister and his department want to forget. It is difficult to imagine a more damning conclusion: almost \$100 million over budget, over time and undermaintained. VAGO found VicRoads:

... failed to properly maintain and monitor the barriers it installed, which increases the risk that they will not perform as intended.

It noted:

If flexible barriers are not properly maintained, then their effectiveness is likely to reduce.

VAGO separately criticised the claimed effectiveness even of undamaged barriers, finding VicRoads did not have strong evidence to support its claims.

The fact that the project was over budget and over time hardly surprised anyone, but what I want to know is how effective the barriers were at preventing crashes and injuries and how much they cost to maintain, both periodically and in response to crashes. Damningly, the Auditor-General's report showed VicRoads had no proper asset records and could not show 'key information' about the 'location, installation date, state of repair and maintenance schedule' of their own barriers. You could not make this stuff up. It should be the most basic and simple information conceivable and goes right to the point of my questions on the whole program: how can VicRoads and now the department begin to quantify the success or otherwise of the program if records are not maintained on the number of accidents at each site and on the frequency and cost of accident repair and routine maintenance?

VAGO certainly agreed. Recommendation 6 of their report, tabled now more than three years ago, was to remedy this baffling failure. Yet in response to my constituency question in March this year the minister revealed this has still not been complied with. The latest response revealed in VAGO's excellent online data dashboard is that the department has collected information on the location of safety barriers and has developed a database to track and store the information. How basic is that? How on earth could it require a VAGO report to tell them to do it? And, worse, the department's response to VAGO continues: in preparing to launch this tool for use it has been identified that further system development is required, so it is still not complete. The note attached says 'In progress – due 28/2/2023'. You can probably guess the action I seek – it is pretty simple: Minister, when will the department comply with best practice, common sense and the Auditor-General's request and assemble the most basic data, and how can any real evaluation be done without it?

Bus route 903

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (18:13): (523) My matter for the adjournment tonight is for the attention of the minister for transport, and it concerns the changes in the 903 bus route that occurred on the 15th of this month. This is an area that I know well geographically. My office was previously quite near to this zone, and I have had a number of people comment to me. The 903 used to run straight up Warrigal Road, turn onto Riversdale Road, run down ultimately to Station Street and then head up towards Box Hill. But this has been rerouted without proper consultation or proper engagement with really anyone much, and now it goes onto Burwood Highway and then heads up Elgar Road.

There are a number of key areas and institutions which are now no longer properly serviced with bus support. The 903 of course is that large orbital that goes right around from the west ultimately down to Mordialloc, which I think is where it ends up. But if you were living near to Warrigal Road or at Cameron Close, the retirement village, if you were a regular at Wattle Park golf club, if you were a younger person who plays on the oval opposite Wattle Park or if you were somebody who went to Wattle Park Primary School, you would want access to this regular, high-quality bus route which has been there for a number of years but has been now unceremoniously dumped. The 766 of course goes on its slow little loopy route up and around, but now there is a large area of terrain that does not have proper bus servicing and support.

I have looked at the Public Transport Victoria website and the journey planner. If you lived at Cameron Close, for example, and you wanted to walk across to the new route of the 903, that would take you 17 minutes. So this is very, very different. Instead of being able to go straight to Box Hill or straight down south to Chadstone or other venues, or even to Camberwell, you have got very long walks and much less access or you can find your way slowly across to the 766 and then go on its snaky route around and then change. This is a very poor outcome and a diminution of service.

What I want the minister for transport to do is to review this unsatisfactory decision to unceremoniously tear away a long-established bus route, leaving a large number of people in this central area of Surrey Hills on one side without proper bus services. It is actually outrageous, it is arrogant and it has been made as a set of decisions without discussing it with the community or those who are impacted.

Juvenile arthritis

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (18:16): (524) My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Health, and it is in relation to support for young people suffering from juvenile arthritis. A constituent of mine, a year 9 student from Caulfield Grammar, Isabella, contacted me and she told me of her story. It is a very well presented argument that she has given to me in relation to the lack of support that the government is providing for people such as her. In 2019 she was diagnosed with juvenile arthritis – a very, very debilitating condition. It is a serious autoimmune condition that affects around a thousand children here in Victoria. Isabella's condition, thankfully, is now in remission, which is terrific. She has had quite serious treatments along the way, and she is in remission. But while she has had this favourable outcome, both the illness and the treatment have had a very debilitating impact on her health and wellbeing, including the side effects of strong medication. She believes that if they could have been avoided and there were alternative pathways she would have had a better outcome.

This issue was looked out recently by a Senate inquiry. Isabella said that she needed the care of a paediatric rheumatologist, specialist nurse, physiotherapist, pain management practitioner and self-care educators. That federal parliamentary inquiry confirmed the serious under-resourcing of paediatric rheumatology services in the states. The action I seek is for the government to provide details of what it is doing to improve rheumatology services in Victoria for those children who suffer from juvenile arthritis and what funding has been provided that will enable appropriate support for people like Isabella to get the treatment and management that they deserve and need.

LGBTIQ+ equality

Matthew BACH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (18:19): (525) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Equality, and the action that I seek is for her to take all necessary steps to eradicate ongoing forms of discrimination against LGBT Victorians when it comes to issues of family and life. I was listening to the minister earlier today when she said something that she says quite regularly, and that is that she really hates it when other Victorians mouth their support for members of the LGBT community and yet then there is a 'but' – 'We support the LGBT community – but.' She said this today in debate; she has said it on many occasions. So I am sure she will not say this to me tonight when I ask her to address several ongoing forms of discrimination, given of course that the minister

continues to say that in Victoria equality is not negotiable. This is a noble sentiment, but in many instances it is not true.

Recently, to come first to issues of family, I have been talking about adoption services. I have been talking about the shocking state of affairs when it comes to Victoria's child protection system: 10,000 vulnerable children are currently in child protection tonight, yet it is impossible to adopt a child. The minister spoke about adoption and adoption equality, as she calls it, earlier today, and yet since adoption equality became law in 2017 fewer than five same-sex couples have been able to adopt a child. At the time Mr Dimopoulos said, rightly, there were thousands of LGBT Victorians who would love to adopt a child. He was right, and yet fewer than five, according to the government's own Department of Justice and Community Safety, have been able to adopt a child. According to groups like Gay Dads and Rainbow Families, that is because of ongoing discrimination, particularly against gay men, through the government's own processes. This is discrimination occurring in Victoria today. If that requires the minister to talk to the other minister who sits directly next to her, the Attorney-General, she can do that. It would not be good enough for her to come back to me and say, 'Oh, but that's not my problem.'

In addition to that, there are huge issues when it comes to surrogacy. Again, in particular gay men wishing to start a family oftentimes have to go overseas because they cannot adopt a child in Victoria or gain access to a surrogate, and yet here in Australia those who have gained access to surrogacy services are not in fact legal parents. This is ongoing discrimination against LGBT people today. Now, I have searched *Hansard* and I have searched elsewhere, and I am not aware that the minister has advocated to her Labor friends in Canberra regarding this issue. I am sure she will not come back to me to say, 'That's an issue, but ultimately it's somebody else's decision.'

Finally, yesterday I had an article published in Australia's most read newspaper advocating on LGBT issues regarding the donation of blood. There is ongoing discrimination in Victoria and around Australia against gay men when it comes to donating blood. I would like to see the minister speak out on this issue, in particular to her federal colleagues. It requires state approval, federal approval and approval of other agencies, but I have no doubt that she will not simply come back to me to say, 'This is an issue, but ultimately it's somebody else's problem.'

Midland Highway

Joe McCRACKEN (Western Victoria) (18:22): (526) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it concerns the lack of any decent maintenance that has been done on the Midland Highway. For those that are not aware, and I know that country highways are a bit of a mystery to a lot of those in the government, the Midland Highway goes from Geelong, it does a big circle all the way around Melbourne, it goes up to Shepparton and it ends up in Mansfield. The particular section that I am talking about is the section between Geelong and Ballarat, which is in my electorate and Mrs McArthur's electorate as well. Between Elaine and Ballarat is a particularly bad section. I have had a number of constituents come to my office and tell me that they have suffered damage on their vehicles because of the surface of the road. One gentleman even said to me that he had to dodge a pothole, probably the size of that desk actually, and in also doing so the car in front of him flicked up one of the witches hats that was on the road – no repairs were being done, mind you – and it shattered the windshield on his car. Unfortunately that did not get to the damage level of, I think, \$1500 or whatever it is that VicRoads will cover, so he was left with quite a significant bill.

This is not acceptable. Let me just put that on the record: this sort of treatment of country Victorians is not acceptable. It does not happen in the city. These sorts of things just do not happen at all. But country people have to put up with this every single day. So the action that I seek, to put it simply, is for the minister to fix the Midland Highway, particularly between Elaine and, let us say, Buninyong near Ballarat. There are countless other stories of where constituents have come through and said that they face similar sorts of circumstances – potholes the size of half the side of the road and shoulders that are crumbling. We would not tolerate this on the Monash Freeway, we would not tolerate it on

the Tullamarine Freeway, yet we are happy to tolerate it on country highways. Is that really fair and equitable? I thought equality in Victoria was non-negotiable. Well, it actually is negotiable when we talk about roads and those users of our roads. It is certainly not equitable treatment that country people feel, and we deserve decent roads. We deserve to get home safely and we deserve to get our product to market safely. Schoolkids deserve to travel on buses that are on safe roads. It should be non-negotiable, but every single day people have to negotiate their way through potholes and different levels of traffic management strategies, which mind you have not actually been doing anything. It is just not fair, so, Minister, fix the roads.

Purple Pinky for Polio

Nicholas McGOWAN (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (18:25): (527) One of the great honours I have performing this role as a member of Parliament is to get to know better many community groups in Ringwood in my electorate, among others, as you know, President. I have become quite accustomed to and acquainted with the work of the Maroondah Rotary Club. In particular I would like to draw attention to their forthcoming fundraiser coming up on Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 October, and that is Purple Pinky for Polio. So it is in that vein that I ask also the Minister for Health to get her little pinky out and turn it purple and to come on down to Croydon Central to speak with them and indulge her purple pinky, of course with a gold coin donation at the same time. She too might be able to assist very many around the world to eradicate polio. Polio of course has afflicted very, very many children right around the globe, including right here in Australia, and in fact we have come tantalising close to eradicating polio. The Rotary Club in Maroondah have already raised \$800 this year, and this can provide as many as 133 vaccinations. Previously they raised \$2200, in the last 12 months, and every dollar they raise is then matched by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to the order of two additional dollars. That is important of course because the fight continues. In particular Pakistan and Afghanistan are two countries where it remains endemic to this day, and that is the focus of much of the effort that occurs.

There are five great reasons to get on board with this campaign. One is because 19 million people who would otherwise be paralysed by polio are walking today and every day of the week and 1.5 million people who would otherwise have died are alive. The second reason is to invest in our future – that is, polio could paralyse as many as 200,000 children each year if we do not get on top of this, so it would make a healthier world for all our children. Third, it would improve child health. Polio surveillance networks are critical in detecting and preventing not only polio itself but also other diseases. Four, it saves money. The evidence is that we have already saved in the order of \$27 billion in healthcare costs since 1988, and we expect to save a further \$14 billion by 2050. And last but not least, we would like to make polio eradication and polio itself history. It would be one of the greatest public health achievements of our lifetime.

Responses

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (18:28): There were 15 adjournment matters this evening to 10 separate ministers, and I will ensure that there are written responses in accordance with the standing orders.

In relation to two of the adjournment matters directed to me in my capacity as Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I am very pleased to indicate to my good friend Mr Tarlamis that I would be delighted to come and visit Wellsprings for Women in Dandenong, and I look forward to organising a time as soon as we can get that happening. Similarly, Mr Berger invited me to attend a Hanukkah festival with him later in the year, and I look forward to making those arrangements.

The PRESIDENT: The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6:29 pm.